

*Encontro do
Comitê Internacional
do Dia Mundial de Oração*

Foz do Iguaçu - 20 a 27 de agosto de 2017



*Buscando sabedoria
para cuidar da
Criação de Deus*



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Buscando sabedoria para cuidar da criação Deus World Day of Prayer International Committee Meeting Report

Rosângela S. Oliveira



Seeking wisdom to care for God's creation in Portuguese, written on the conference hall banner, set the context of the International Committee Meeting of World Day of Prayer, held in Foz do Iguaçu, Paraná, Brazil from August 20-27, 2017. The theme was an invitation to collectively commit our prayer and action towards environment care, which is the focus of the 2018 WDP program written by the Suriname committee.

We had an intense and participatory program. It was collaboratively led by delegates, guests, and the executive committee members. We were 188 participants representing 81 countries. We came together to continue building the WDP movement and make decisions about the international leadership and programs for the next term.

WDP Brazil as hosting country welcomed the participants and gave us a sense of the three frontier states (Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina) with a cultural presentation by a group of young dancers and musicians from Paraguay.

The opening celebration was based on the Suriname worship service with the theme *"All God's creation is very good!"* Silvia Regina Lima e Silva introduced the Bible Study based on Genesis 1:2.1-4 during the meditation moment and concluded the study on the next day. The hermeneutic perspective that crossed the reflection was hope. The hope proclaimed, affirmed, and experienced in the midst of pain, the denial of life, and in the midst of chaos.

Sarah de Roure gave a presentation on the environmental context and communities in Brazil, telling the stories of the indigenous women in the Amazon and the indiscriminate exploitation of the rainforest through predatory economic practices such as mining, large-scale logging, water and soil contamination by livestock and soybean plantations.

The WDP program is grounded in the Bible, and that always makes the Bible study sessions a key moment in our formation process. Besides Silvia Silva, there were two other theologians guiding the Bible Study. Dora Arce Valentin chose the text of Proverbs 31:10-31 to challenge WDP women to see the potential that this movement can represent globally and locally when wisdom inspires transformation. Ulrike Bechmann led the Bible study on Luke 14:15-24 introducing the theme of the 2019 program written by WDP Slovenia: *"Come – Everything is Ready."* There is a moment of justice - when the poor is empowered to come to the table and the rich to be changed. The slave is an enabler of the transformation and we can ask ourselves, how can WDP be an enabler?

There were two set of workshops. One day the focus was on the theme of the meeting, and the next day was focused on ways to renew and strengthen the WDP movement. Also, twelve small thematic groups were previously formed on a variety of topics to allow for meaningful conversations that would impact WDP action and response in the communities.

A community building session invited the participants to share and pray together. A choir was formed by the participants who sang new songs with the help of the song leaders. Plus, we celebrated the meeting of women from the reformation and WDP women, telling the story of women's leadership in the past and today. A prayer room where any participant could spend some quite time praying and meditating was set and available at all times.

We are collecting the outlines, presentations, or reports of each activity, and they will be available for download on the WDPIC website. We expect you to use those resources in your community and WDP committee.



On Thursday, we wore black in solidarity with the Thursdays in Black campaign to say no to rape and violence. It was powerful! We will bring that awareness to our WDP committee and community.

Finally, we want to inform you of the newly elected members of the executive committee and the new calendar of themes and writer countries.

Chairperson Laurence Gangloff (France) Treasurer Susan Jackson-Dowd (USA)	Africa Henriette Mbatchou (Cameroon) Joyce Larko Steiner (Ghana)	Asia Moumita Biswas (India) Vino Schubert (Sri Lanka)	Caribbean/North America Ruth V.E. Phillips (Barbados) Lauren Wilks (Canada)
Europe Emmanuelle Bauer (Luxembourg) Senka Sestak Peterlin (Croatia)	Latin America Rebeca Cascante (Costa Rica) Esther Susana Renner (Brazil)	Middle East Maral Barzkian Haidostian (Lebanon) Nora Carmi (Palestine)	Pacific Vicki Marney (Australia) Henrica Nio Marona (Cook Islands)

The working group on themes and writer countries revised all the submissions received, and based on the areas of concern of the worldwide movement, the urges of our time, the basic structure and capacity of the national committees, the geographic balance, and with prayers, they have designed the following program:

2022 - I know the plans I have for you, by WDP England/Wales/Northern Ireland
 2023 - I have heard about your faith, by WDP Taiwan
 2024 - I beg you... bear with one another in love, by WDP Palestine
 2025 - I made you wonderful, by WDP Cook Islands
 2026 - I will give you rest: come, by WDP Nigeria

On the last day, the outgoing and newly elected executive members met to pass along information about their region and to encourage the new leadership. Also, the delegates of the selected countries met with the new chairperson and executive director to have a brief overview of the writing process and timeline.

The closing worship service is the moment of entrusting the new leadership with their responsibility and prayers for guidance. The offering collected was dedicated to the Fund for Tomorrow, which enables young women and national committees with limited resources to be part of the international meeting. The committees in Greece, Lebanon, Palestine, Sweden, and Uruguay gave their offering in honor of a leader in their country. Their story will be posted on the WDPIC website.

2012-2017 Executive Committee Reports
Corinna Harbig – Chairperson



I'd like to take you with me on a journey. This journey starts in 2012 in New York, where I was elected the Chairperson and it ends here in 2017, at our International Meeting in Foz de Iguaçu.

It has been a very nice, enriching, heart filling and educational journey. I have never been alone or felt lost as WDP chairperson, because you as the World Day of Prayer women travelled with me on the way of "Informed Prayer and Prayerful Action."

Starting in New York, we informed each other about the push and pull factors for migration all over the world, about the injustices towards migrants, and we learned about many fantastic projects to help and support migrants and to welcome them and live together in our communities.

Together with the women of France we deepened this theme in our worship service for 2013, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." In this preparation, many of us became aware that in nearly every family there is a story of migration. Migration is not happening somewhere, it is happening among us. Following the footsteps of Jesus, WDP groups started projects focused on migrant issues, raising awareness, teaching languages, helping migrants deal with government bureaucracy to be able to stay in the country of arrival.

Our journey went on to our 2014 WDP celebration with the women of Egypt and the theme "Streams in the desert" with the Samaritan woman talking and discussing with Jesus, eye to eye, theological questions: What does it mean "water of life"? How does it nourish our faith in the deserts of our life? How can we share "water of life"?

Together with the women of Bahamas we prayed in 2015 and learned from Jesus' word: "Do you know what I have done to you?" What does it mean to follow in his footsteps, to wash one another's feet to serve one another?

Cuba, in 2016, brought Jesus' word: "Receive children, receive me!" to the most vulnerable in our communities - the children, the migrants, the poor, the single mothers, old people and many others. Finally we celebrated this year, 2017, the WDP worship service with the women of the Philippines with the parable of the workers in the vineyard: "Am I being unfair to you?" What is fair, what is unfair in our world, in our communities? What does it mean for our life as Christian women? The justice of God is mercy. Mercy is the measure in God's kingdom, not money or power.

Together with you, as the World Day of Prayer women, we are on the journey of "Informed Prayer. Prayerful Action." We have the promise of the coming kingdom of God, the kingdom of justice and peace for the whole creation. Jesus leads and empowers us to solidarity with the women, children and men living at the edge of our communities and society. That is the core of our global ecumenical movement.

Summary of activities performed:

- Communication with the executive committee members, staff, and national committees
- Plan and chair WDPIC meetings: Executive Advisory Board (annually), Executive Committee (USA 2014) and International Committee (Brazil 2017)
- Participate in the preparatory workshop with several national committees (Slovenia, Albania, Germany, and Croatia)
- Meet the writing committees in the Philippines and Suriname
- Participate in the WDP European Conference (Austria 2014), WCC Assembly (South Korea, 2013) and WCC Central Committee Meetings (Geneva 2014, Norway 2016) and ICFLC Annual Meetings

I want to offer my heartfelt thanks to you, as the World Day of Prayer women, who bring our movement into life, to the Executive Committee who worked really hard and continuously, to our staff in the office -Samantha and Rosângela. God bless you and God bless our globally ecumenical work for justice and peace.

Marcia Florkey - Treasurer

For the past ten years I have had the privilege and joy of serving WDPIC as the treasurer. During that time, the most meaningful moments were to work alongside with many of you. We deepened relationships and gave glory to God through our World Day of Prayer celebrations every year. As treasurer I was able to see the tireless work of our executives, Rosângela Oliveira and her predecessor, Eileen King, as they put countless hours into developing within a very modest budget. I am grateful for their talents and commitment to this movement.

For this final time I present this report from a distance of many miles away, but knowing that each of you and the essence of World Day of Prayer as prayerful action for peace and justice are still very close to my heart. I pray for many more years to celebrate with you! (*See Financial Report p.18*)

Rosângela Oliveira – Executive Director

Thank you for the opportunity to serve this woman led worldwide ecumenical movement for 5 years. You received me at the last International Meeting in New York, in 2012, and now I welcome you to my home. I am Brazilian, born and raised in Rio de Janeiro.

Thank you to WDP Brazil for welcoming us and for the lengthy hours of planning. Thanks to the National Committees for supporting financially the international coordination of this movement. It is your annual contribution and your additional offering to our Travel Funds and Fund for Tomorrow that made it possible for this room to be filled.

WDPIC office serves the movement through the grassroots, collective and ecumenical process of raising the voice of women and their communities through the worship service materials you receive in this generous act of listening. Our “prayer is rooted in listening to God and to one another.” That is the spirituality that inspires this movement.

Even though, our predecessors have set a day for this spirituality to become visible to the world – which is currently the first Friday of March, we have never been encapsulated, limited, restricted or contained by only one day to pray. WDP is a process based on raising awareness that generates action of solidarity and justice in our communities and around the world. Theologically, we call it “Informed prayer. Prayerful action.”

The Journal is a global picture of this movement. I do enjoy reading the Annual Reports and finding what was unique in your yearly experience. What have you learned? How have the communities responded in concrete ways? The Journal is a snapshot of who we are, behind those words and photos is the leadership of women – lay and clergy – crossing borders for love and justice.

Let me mention just a few borders WDP women have crossed, that I learned reading your reports:

- We empower women, children and youth to lead social changes, alleviate poverty and build a community free of all forms of violence and discrimination,
- We build relationships and friendships with women from different denominations, Christian traditions or faiths, in a context where women are still absent or very limitedly represented at the table of the ecumenical dialogue among the head of the churches,
- We create a space for the voice of migrants and refugees in our communities to listen face to face the people of the focus country, in the midst of increasing xenophobia, intolerance and hatred against others who are different from us,
- We raise awareness for children’s right and receive them as we want to receive Jesus,
- We lead worship services, speak from the pews in a context where the pew is still not considered a place for women to lead,
- We advocate for the end of gender based violence, for care of the environment, for the end of human trafficking, for education about HIV-AIDS and access to health services for people who are positive, for a community where all are welcomed,
- We recognize that we are a diverse community. We come from different social, cultural, economic, educational, ethnic, age, body ability, sexual orientation and Christian tradition backgrounds and we want to cross over the dynamics of power that are in place among us in the world and in this room,
- We create scholarship funds to provide education to children and young women, to support small farmers, and people living with disabilities. We take food to people in prison, pray with those in hospitals and nursing home, and we play with children in the schools,
- We are in the streets marching for peace and reconciliation, climate justice and women’s rights,
- We read the Bible together to ground our work in the liberating words of God,

This is how, as we say in the Guiding Principles, responsible action comes out of the worship service, and how we fulfill our motto of “Informed prayer. Prayerful action.”

Still, there is much more we can do in partnership with God. Let’s do it with creativity, radical hospitality, compassion, listening in prayer and action.

May God bless us all with wisdom, grace and passion for justice.

AFRICA REGION
Henriette Mbatchou (Cameroon) and Joyce Larko (Ghana)



The World Day of Prayer is well celebrated in a number of African Countries. However, until 2012 it operated critically under close supervision of the International Office. Thus the then two regional representatives were supported to travel and attend International meetings. National WDPs in Africa were very functional at the local level but on the sub regional and regional front not much was heard.

At the 2012 quadrennial meeting held in New York, the two elected regional representatives including the delegates who attended set the following agenda:

1. To organize an African Regional Meeting/ Conference
2. To supervise the organization of two Sub regional Meetings
3. To open and operationalize a bank account for the region so that the representatives can function.

Summary of activities:

Regional meeting while attending the Zimbabwe 25th Anniversary, October 2012

Members of WDP South Africa, Kenya, Botswana, Zambia and Angola with the Regional Representative met and the following actions were defined:

- Open a bank account in Ghana
- Yearly contribution of \$200 for 5 years as a start up
- Organize the first African Regional Conference in Kenya or Ghana
- Election of Sub regional coordinators to facilitate work of WDP
- Organize South African Sub-regional Conference

Implementation:

- Bank account was opened and operationalized with Ecobank Ghana Ltd
- About 10 countries contributed religiously till 2015
- Sub regional coordinators were elected
- Africa Regional conference was held in Ghana in 2014
- South African Sub regional conference was held in Angola in 2016

Africa Regional Conference

The Conference was held in Ghana in June 2014, with a total of 76 members representing WDP from Togo, Cote d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Gabon, Ghana, Botswana, Kenya, Angola, Zimbabwe, DR Congo, Mali, and South Africa; and WDPIC Executive Director, Rosangela Oliveira. The meeting was held under the theme: *"An empowered woman – asset for development"* (Proverbs 31: 7-10).

Participants were taken through Biblical studies of women in the bible who played effective roles in leadership. They also benefitted from leadership training models that seek to help them enhance their capacity in mobilization of women. They were also exposed to the principles and practice of WDP. The

region received support from FLC in the organization of the conference. It was exciting and the next meeting is scheduled for 2018.

Southern Africa Sub-Regional Conference

The first Sub regional conference was held in Angola and was attended by South Africa, Botswana, Angola, and Zambia. The two regional representatives participated in May 2016. The theme was “Let us arise and build.” Bible studies were led by Rev. Jacqueline Diavava and Rev. Ana Vongula. Ms. Joyce Steiner led the various discussions on leadership, advocacy and lobbying. The next steps would be to strengthen the National Committees of Mozambique, Malawi, Lesotho and Namibia as we plan towards the next sub regional conference.

Writers Workshop

Ms. Joyce Steiner joined Rosângela Oliveira in September 2016 to Zimbabwe for the first workshop in preparation of the National Committee of Zimbabwe to write the 2020 Workshop material under the theme: *“Rise, take up your mat and walk.”* During this workshop the national Committee was introduced to the principles of WDP and the guidelines for writer countries. They were assisted in identifying the needed resources to assist in the development of the material. A second meeting was held in April 2017.

Visits by the Regional Representatives

Henriette Mbatchou – Visited Gabon, Togo, and the Central African Republic to assist them in strengthening the activities of the National Committees. In the Central African Republic they elected members to start the committee after they had scattered as a result of the war in the country. She gave them the materials and they celebrated 2017 WDP. It is our hope to continue to support them.

Joyce Steiner - Visited Sierra Leone after the Ebola scare to commiserate with the committee and also share materials on the prevention of Ebola as was done in Ghana. Similar missions to Kenya for All Africa Council of Churches women’s meeting led to the discovery of the Liaison persons of Sudan and South Sudan. They were linked with the International Committee and will be receiving all other communication.

Challenges

1. Poor communication
2. Difficulty in travelling within Africa (very expensive)
3. Lack of reporting and payment of commitment due to International and Africa

Way Forward

The process of revitalizing Africa has been a difficult task but with the commitment of the regional representatives and the strong national committees we will achieve our set target by 2022.

1. Two workshops will be held for young women in 2019
2. The National Committees of Togo, CAR, and Sierra Leone will be strengthened.

Conclusion

It is our hope that the good Lord will continue to strengthen us in the quest to mobilize funds to help the African Region to be a strong force in the WDP movement.

ASIA REGION

Vino Schubert (Sri Lanka) and Sirirat Pusurinkham (Thailand)



Sirirat Pusurinkham had the opportunity to connect and to speak to WDP members in many countries while attending meetings related to her ministry in Malaysia, Myanmar, Laos, South Korea and the Philippines. At the General Assembly of the WCC, she participated at the workshop organized by the WDPIC office. She represented WDPIC at World YWCA Assembly in Thailand and, she was also present at the Asian Church Women's Conference.

Vino Schubert represented WDPIC at the Asian Church Women's Conference, in the Philippines where she also attended the meeting with the Philippines National Committee. WDP Sri Lanka was also able to help WDP Singapore by sharing the Tamil translation of the 2017 WDP service, which was greatly appreciated by the Singapore Committee.

To prepare and build community among the Asia delegates at the International Meeting, she created a photo album with a photo and a short description of each delegate and the country they represented.

CARIBBEAN AND NORTH AMERICA REGION

Alison Carter (Barbados) and Marilyn Fortin (Canada)



Our major concern continues to be networking across the island chain, USA, and Canada. The geography of our countries appears to make some regions isolated. More specifically for the Caribbean, accessing worship booklets at a reasonable cost is also a challenge, where we save on duty by ordering less, we spend on photo copying. Efforts at connecting and communicating with the chairpersons of national committees at times other than for March celebration, has been weak.

It would be an advantage to have a regional office set up and dedicated to reaching out and encouraging persons after the first Friday in March to work together under an ecumenical banner for justice in the nations. While ideal, funding this kind of initiative may be considered insupportable.

Issues such as human trafficking, violence against women, economic poverty, HIV/AIDS, discrimination against refugees, lack of proper health care and of clean drinking water are a few of the common concerns.

WDP Malaysia brought us the story of Irene Fernandez where we learned about justice for the poor, for the disenfranchised and that justice requires commitment.

WDP France introduced us to the plight and concerns of the immigrants, and then revealed to us how we welcome the stranger in our midst through deeds of compassion.

WDP Egypt women responded to the story of the Samaritan woman at the well through liturgical dance, dramatic presentations, food and fellowship. The biblical geography intersected with modern concerns over land and water rights and political upheaval.

WDP Bahamas services helped us imagine what it meant to accept and experience radical love from Jesus. Jesus washed the feet of the disciples and instructed us to follow his example - to serve others. WDP Cuba reminded us of the responsibility we have for all of God's children.

The themes have given tremendous voice to the issues through the writer countries and we all discover that these issues are experienced in various degrees worldwide and really need the prayerful action to bring justice to prevail in our nations.

WDP in the region is inspired simply by the desire to be a part of this meaningful annual celebration, to share fellowship, Bible Studies, music, traditional food, and to meet new people through the activity. One challenge, as was anticipated is moving the region from focus on a day of prayer alone to prayerful action driven by the 2012 conversation on the spiral of justice. It has been a transition which called for another level of commitment. The systemic challenge is the busyness of the leaders.

Most National Committees coordinate the Services well and have an ecumenical celebration. Whether it is WDP Movement linking with NGO's to improve collaboration and to identify groups which could be funded through offerings like in the Bahamas and in Grenada, visits to prison and educational institutions to raise awareness, or the Symposium and Festival Days of Barbados and Canada respectively, WDP is gaining recognition. Canada and USA offerings support many grants nationally and internationally which benefit women and children and encourage ecumenism. The WDP movement needs to be continuously uplifted to the younger generation to enable them to grow with the movement.

Using the children's service, Bahamas, Barbados, St. Lucia, and now Tobago have initiatives with children and youth through schools and others islands use the material in Sunday Schools.

WDP allows us to relate to each other through our common concern and we pray around these concerns for every person regardless of where they live. There is deliberate planning for different denominations to host so that they reach out to other denominations surrounding their churches.

There is some follow up, but more is necessary. The ability of the Church jointly speaking to the tough issues that the society face would be the first phase of transforming the society, especially since the Body of Christ knows that in Christ everything is possible.

EUROPE REGION

Emmanuelle Bauer (Luxembourg) and Laurence Gangloff (France)



What were the major concerns of women from our region? How were they lifted up through celebrations, network communication, workshops, prayers and actions? How to make WDP grow? How to interest young people in WDP?

Women were lifted up through...

- Celebrations, especially with the foot washing (Bahamas 2015): to touch and being touched was really moving as well as through the 2017 celebration with the situation of young girls in the Philippines.

- Network communication: since Ohio 2014, when we had the Executive committee meeting, every Monday, a photo is posted on Facebook, inviting to join with the prayer for peace. And every Monday, the prayer is different... like the candle. Sometimes, more than 2,200 people “like” in a week.
- Workshops: for example in 2016 England, Wales and Northern Ireland organized a “Younger Women’s Conference” called Ypray?
- Prayers: The chosen topics that moved women were for example, the place of the strangers in our Society (France 2013), the need of water (Egypt 2014), cancer (Bahamas 2015), involving young girls in the celebration (Cuba 2016), and God’s Justice not seeing as Human Justice (Philippines 2017)
- Actions: involving young girls in our celebrations, and with Suriname’s celebration we are going clearly in actions for the respect of the Creation.

What has inspired WDP in our region? In what ways? Is there any follow up?

One sociological fact:

- In West-Europe WDP is an old tradition and in East-Europe, WDP is growing. There is a gap between the two parts, but as we share the same celebration, this unites us. We think that the partnership in prayer could help a lot to share the different experiences between these two European views. Some new countries joined us with their possibilities (Rep. of Georgia).

Follow-up:

- The follow-up was to travel mainly in East Europe in order to support the growing of WDP
- To keep accurate the Who’s Who Booklet with the contact of each National Committee
- Preparing the next European Conference (Netherlands 2019)

Indicate one accomplishment and one challenge carried out by WDP in the countries of our region.

One accomplishment:

- Countries celebrate anniversaries (Austria- 60th) and are thankful. They prepare for tomorrow, so that WDP continues. This is full of hope.

Challenges carried out by WDP-EUROPE:

- European women need to be moved in their spirituality. The frontier is thin between to be moved and to be shocked. The challenge is to go step by step, not too fast, not too slow.
- We need to find a way to involve young women and active women. In some countries, the composition of National Committee could be renewed and more open to new - young members.

Suggestions for the coming celebrations:

- Separate what is the liturgy (untouchable) and what is the proposal (optional).
- Write short sentences in order to facilitate translation.
- The stories of the women make WDP move: helping women not only through prayers but with actions. Be careful with the length.
- Be full of hope and trust.

LATIN AMERICA

Rebeca Cascante Gómez (Costa Rica) and Esther Susan Renner (Brazil)



It has been 5 years of challenges and blessings. We accepted the challenge of the representative role which has implied additional work but has brought blessings in many ways, for which we are grateful to God.

Summary of activities:

Central America and Spanish Caribbean Sub-Region

- Participated at the writer country workshop with WDP Cuba. This enriched our understanding of WDP and the creative processes occurring in each country.
- Participated in the reading and revision of the worship service and educational materials
- Participated at the annual meetings of the WDPIC Advisory Committee.
- Organized workshops to strengthen WDP in the region, in 2015 and 2017, with representative of five countries - Honduras, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala.
- Held preparation and evaluation workshops, which have helped to consolidate the organizing process and motivated the celebrations.

SNC Accomplishments:

- The Strengthening National Committee (SNC) workshops resulted in the increasing of the number of celebrations. From 15 celebrations to 30, which represent a growth of 50%, reaching more than 1,000 participants in 2017 alone.
- Increasing understanding of what WDP is.
- Better use of all the material prepared by the writer countries, moving away from using just the worship service.
- National WDP committees have been organized and more women are committed to continue the program.
- In these last 4 years we have held preparation and evaluation workshops which have consolidated and further motivated the celebrations.

South American Sub-Region

- In 2013, WDP Brazil assembly was held with 75 delegates. WDPIC executive director presented the responsibility and tasks of hosting an International Meeting. Then, the assembly voted to extend an official invitation to host WDPIC in 2017 in Brazil.
- In 2015, WDP Brazil board received a visit from WDPIC Chairperson Corinna Harbig and the Executive Director Rosângela Oliveira to plan together the meeting
- In 2016, Rosângela attended WDP Brazil assembly, where a new board was elected, and time was spent informing the assembly and moving the organizing plans ahead. WDP Paraguay members also attended the assembly.
- In 2017, in closer preparation for the International Meeting, the executive director attended the board meeting of WDP Brazil

- WDP Paraguay holds an annual retreat with participation of other countries in the region. These are joyous moments and encounters that make an impact every year.

Challenges:

- To hold at least one workshop to strengthen WDP in countries that has not previously participated, and to motivate the organization of a national committee
- Encourage one country in the region to apply to be a writer country and support this process.

MIDDLE EAST

Camelia Basta (Egypt) and Nora Carmi (Palestine)



The overall situation in the Middle East has been extremely unsteady and each of the countries included has experienced the same fate, but with degrees of variation.

To sum it all up, there have been severe political changes with marked uprisings and religious intolerance leading to assaults on churches and killings of innocent peoples and yet at the same time we witnessed both in Egypt and Palestine joint efforts of solidarity between the two peoples. For example, the support of the Muslim community when churches were blown up on Palm Sunday and Pope Francis's meeting with the Coptic Patriarch and Azhar scholars in Egypt. In Palestine/Israel, interreligious gatherings took place when Jewish fanatics tried to burn the Church in Tabgha and Christian support at the Dome of the Rock.

There has been a rise of terrorism that affected Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Palestine, and even Turkey. This growing violent movement attributed to Islam is a product of foreign ideologies exploiting religious fundamental beliefs that have destroyed the beautiful creation of God ecologically, socially and morally, reducing human beings to inhuman barbarians. The plight of the refugees fleeing the illogic wrath of destroyers of culture and archaeology such as in Palmyra, Deir Zor, Aleppo and Idlib as well as the abduction of two high leveled religious leaders by Isis are concrete examples of how the divine image of humans is being destroyed. This is why we need to restore together all God's beautiful and good creation.

The more tangible effect has been the economic burden primarily, making the poor poorer, and reducing the affluent middle classes into impoverished groups struggling to live a decent life. With increased numbers of asylum seekers in Lebanon and Jordan, millions of refugees live in rubble and face the threat and risk of health epidemics. The efforts of certain churches cannot be ignored and having world connections also helped find safe havens to those who were not drowned at sea.

Though the inner communication between WDP Middle East countries was minimal, prayers were always lifted at all times since we all shared the same global difficulties and threats.

We are sorry that the representatives of Jordan and Turkey are not with us today. But each country will have the opportunity to enumerate its own grievances throughout the coming days, we will mention here that preparations for WDP services starting in September had not stopped and celebrations in March added the feeling of spirituality brought to us by France, Egypt, Bahamas, Cuba, and the Philippines.

What faces us the WDP movement today in the Middle East?

From a theological perspective, the situation in Palestine Israel should still be a driving force for the openness to the 'other' and the work for a just peace; and life with dignity should unite us all.

- We are challenged to include younger people in order to hand over the responsibility.
- We are challenged to work for denominational unity and widen our services to the addicted, the prisoners, the street children, and residents of the garbage world in Egypt.
- Living the commandment of love in action is the best witness to the WDP movement
- We are challenged to establish better contacts in the region, especially with Syria.

The continuity of the movement is dependent upon the wisdom of the older generation with the commitment and creativity of the young.

PACIFIC REGION

Katea Lutui (Tonga) and Sala Naveata (Fiji)



The Regional Meeting was a wonderful time to build relationships and understand the successes and challenges that face World Day of Prayer in our Pacific Region. Each delegate was asked to share a snap shot of their country based on what was working well and what are our challenges.

We discovered that there are many things that we can learn from each other throughout the Pacific. Services times and community involvement was discussed. Social justice issues and climate change were important topics.

Our challenges are not unique to one country; we all expressed concern regarding World Day of Prayer engaging with young people. We all agreed that we need to take action to insure the movement did not die out in our region.



Financial Report

WDPIC ACTUAL INCOME REPORT – March 2012 to February 2017					
Income	Mar 2012- Feb 2013	Mar 2013- Feb 2014	Mar 2014- Feb 2015	Mar 2015- Feb 2016	Mar 2016- Feb 2017
Operating					
Annual Contribution	166,446	157,177	170,517	287,022	121,812
International Meeting Fees	59,632				
Investment Income	15,290	9,585	40,473	16,904	15,932
Release of restrict assets	317,282	216,085	177,456	34,260	165,326
Total	558,650	382,847	388,446	338,186	303,070
Temporarily restricted					
Special Funds & Grants	615,261	40,248	36,318	182,699	27,411
Investment Income	15,054	30,746	27,331	(13,014)	26,656
Release of restrict assets	(317,282)	(216,085)	(177,456)	(34,260)	(165,326)
Total	313,033	(145,091)	(113,807)	135,425	(111,259)
Total Actual Income	871,683	237,756	274,639	473,611	191,811
WDPIC ACTUAL EXPENSES REPORT					
International Coordination	364,143	23,906	45,017	8,600	14,625
Theme Preparation	34,448	10,851	12,009	18,850	10,299
Strengthening National Committee Workshops		6,085	13,526	16,796	15,028
General administration	70,835	63,480	55,206	55,078	59,725
Personnel	173,138	143,964	134,253	140,366	123,086
Publication & promotion	8,934	9,464	11,495	7,747	3,268
Total Actual Expenses	651,498	257,750	271,506	247,437	226,032

WDPIC PROPOSED BUDGET – March 2017 to February 2018						
Income	Mar 2017 Feb 2018	Mar 2018 Feb 2019	Mar 2019 Feb 2020	Mar 2020 Feb 2021	Mar 2021 Feb 2022	Mar 2022 Feb 2023
Operating						
Annual Contribution	320,000	260,000	268,000	270,000	272,000	340,000
International Meeting Fees	70,000					190,000
Total	390,000	260,000	268,000	270,000	272,000	530,000
Temporarily restricted						
Special Funds & Grants	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000
Fund For Tomorrow/ Travel Funds*	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
Total	70,000	70,000	70,000	70,000	70,000	70,000
Total income	460,000	330,000	338,000	340,000	342,000	600,000
WDPIC PROPOSED EXPENSES						
International Coordination	182,000	19,000	33,500	18,000	17,000	284,558
Theme preparation	15,500	25,000	22,500	18,600	18,500	20,000
Strengthening National Committee Workshops	50,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	20,000
General Administration	52,400	57,262	61,566	66,865	66,156	67,278
Personnel	152,100	159,238	162,134	167,135	173,344	179,164
Publication & promotion	8,000	9,500	8,300	9,400	7,000	9,000
Reserved for International Meeting Year expenses*		20,000	10,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
Total	460,000	330,000	338,000	340,000	342,000	600,000

2017-2022 Executive Committee Members Biography

CHAIRPERSON



Laurence Gangloff - laurence.gangloff67@gmail.com

France

I was born in 1968. My first WDP experience was as a teenager when my pastor asked me to read a short text from the liturgy. I was so afraid and so proud at the same time! Today, I'm married and a mother to 3 boys.

I was ordained as a Lutheran pastor in 2002. I served an Alsatian parish for 7 years. Since 2009, I have been working in the Offices of the United Protestant Churches in Alsace Lorraine (UEPAL) serving the Sunday schools, producing educational Christian books, and leading a French Christian Educational Website group (with Swiss and Belgium colleagues). The Protestants are a minority in France.

From 1996 till 2001, I spent 5 years in Lebanon with my family and could participate in the Lebanese liturgy "Holy Spirit Fill Us." When I was back in France, I had this rare experience to be part of the writing process in the French Committee and the 2013 theme "I was a Stranger and You Welcomed Me". I served the WDP French Committee from 2009-2017 as secretary and was responsible for communication. My vision for the WDP: That we, woman, are able to be moved by the Biblical message and then find the courage to improve our society. My wish for 2018: that we experience personally God's blessing "We are very good"!

TREASURER



Susan Jackson-Dowd - Susan.Jackson-Dowd@pcusa.org

United States

I served on the World Day of Prayer USA Committee for 10 years (2006–2016), the last three as chair. I served as Communications/Resource Committee chair for many of those years, and as vice-chair for four years. I have also served as a communication consultant for the International Committee of the Fellowship of the Least Coin, working with the committee to publish two books and other materials as needed.

For the last four years, I have served as the executive director of Presbyterian Women in the PC (USA), Inc. (PW). The 13 years prior, I served as PW's communications coordinator. From 1994 to 2000, I served as managing editor for *Horizons*, PW's magazine and Bible study.

I have had financial responsibilities in all my positions with Presbyterian Women, and am happy to bring those skills, as well as others as needed, to the World Day of Prayer International Committee. My time with the USA Committee was meaningful and fulfilling. The World Day of Prayer movement is a passion for me because I know that women praying and working together to expose and address systemic problems in church and society is critical if we are to create positive, sustainable change.

AFRICA



Henriette Mbatchou - mbatchouhenriette@yahoo.fr

Cameroon

My name is Henriette Mbatchou, born Henga Njieutcham. I was born in Loum, Cameroon in 1956. I am originally from the West Region of the NDE Department. I am married and a mother to two children. I am a professor of secondary school educational techniques. I teach mathematics.

I am the National President of the Evangelical Christian Women's Union of Cameroon, comprised of close to 15,000 women under my direction stating in 2006. Since 2004, In addition to that, I am the President of the National Committee of World Prayer Day, and a member of the Executive Committee of the World Day of Prayer, International Committee. I am also one of the African representatives at the New York Assembly in June 2012. Since October 2016, I had been elected as the president of Cevaa (Communauté d'Eglises en Mission, 35 churches in five continents).

I am always adamant that women are burning crafts woman of stability and peace through prayer, praise and adoration. This is the reason why, from very early on, I was very interested in the WDP, a pedestal of excellence of feminine engagement to life in prayer.

I am strongly dedicated to the belief and faith in Jesus Christ, who saves. My cherished hope is that the WDP continues to be the crucible of the consolidation of peace, harmony, brotherhood, and solidarity between the people.

I pray to God, always present, to illuminate those in charge and the members of the JMP through the world, so that our many different celebrations give all a direction of life, love, and sharing, in Jesus Christ our savor.



Joyce Larko Steiner - joycelarko@yahoo.co.uk

Ghana

My name is Joyce Larko Steiner. I am married with two children and I am an Anglican. I am currently a PhD Candidate pursuing Counseling Psychology; I hold an MPhil in Guidance and Counseling and a BA Hons in Social Work. I joined the Christian Council of Ghana as Coordinator for Youth and Young Women's Program in 1994 and that gave me ecumenical experience.

In 1998 I assumed the role of the liaison for WDP Ghana. I have been part of the adaptation committee and also the main organizer for the National World Day of Prayer. I have participated in 3 Quadrennial meetings since 2002 and I have done some work in HIV with young women. Currently I am working with children who have been trafficked and their mothers, providing assistance for social integration and rehabilitation. I served my term as a representative of WDP for the Africa Region and together with my other colleague we set out to revive the movement on the continent and indeed during our tenure we have made some modest gains and hope to consolidate it during our second term. My vision for WDP is to continue to make it relevant and get young people interested in it. I would empower women, especially the younger ones, to take up leadership roles in the church and on the ecumenical front. I will work assiduously to make Africa proud and to get her rightful position on the Global Front.

ASIA



Vino Schubert - vino_schubert@yahoo.com

Sri Lanka

I am Vino Schubert, from Sri Lanka, and I am married and have three grown up sons. My husband, Steve, and I, worship at the Christian Reformed Church of Sri Lanka (Presbyterian Church) where Steve presently serves as an Elder. I work as the Confidential/Ministry Secretary for the Denomination and am also the Vice President of the Denominational Women's Federation with a membership of approximately 200 ladies, which seeks to bring together ladies from the Sinhala, Tamil and English congregations. I am also a Board member/Honorary Secretary of the Brohier Memorial Home for Aged men, which is an Elders Home run by the CRC.

I am currently reading for my degree in English Language and English Language Teaching at the Open University of Sri Lanka. English Language teaching is a real need in our country, with many Sri Lankans striving to learn the Language. By graduating with the BA I am hoping to serve my country, where the people are beginning to realize the importance of being fluent in the English Language. I have been involved with the WDP Sri Lanka Committee for several years and functioned as Honorary Secretary of the Committee for five years and also as Liaison person for six years. At the Annual General Meeting held in May 2012, I was elected Chairperson of the WDP National Committee and still continue to be the Chairperson. I was also the WDP Representative on the National Association of Church Women – Sri Lanka Committee.

As Chairperson, my vision is to ensure that Sri Lankans are made aware of the ministry of WDP in a greater measure. Steps are underway to visit the different regions of Sri Lanka, educating the Churches of this ministry and also to hold services in more regions. As a Representative of the Asian Region on the WDPIC Committee, my vision is to work closely with the national committees of the Asian Region and strive for a more meaningful relationship with the members of our region. By working more closely with these Committees I am hoping that I could share their vision, needs and frustrations at the WDPIC meetings and thereby try to further the ministry in this Region.



Moumita Biswas - moumita.wdp.asia@gmail.com

India

I am a South Asian feminist theologian from the Church of North India at present serving as Executive Secretary of 'Women's Concerns Ministry of National Council of Churches' in India. I have been involved with WDP India since 2004. I am the liaison person of WDP India and I am also serving as Steering Group member of 'International Anglican Women's Network' of the Anglican Communion. I also served as Executive Secretary of Women and Gender Justice Department of Christian Conference in Asia - a Regional Ecumenical organization that works in partnership with churches in 17 countries in Asia including Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand. I also served as the Asia Representative and Committee member of the Fellowship of Least Coin Movement (ICFLC) from 2007-2011; also as part of Movers Team of World Council of Churches Program on Just Community of Women & Men. I initiated the 365 Days Zero Tolerance to Gender Based Violence: Make it Happen Now Campaign of National Council of Churches motivating churches and women's fellowship to work towards ending gender based violence. I am passionately involved in promoting the 'Thursdays in Black Campaign' (A world free of Rape and Gender based violence), and the End Human Trafficking and End Child Abuse Campaign. I am working with women's fellowship in India and Asia to promote these campaigns through WDP and FLC prayer movements.

CARIBBEAN/NORTH AMERICA



Ruth V. E. Phillips- sergmummy@yahoo.com

Barbados

I graduated Codrington College and the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus with a BA Theology (Honors); Ordained Itinerant Elder with the African Methodist Episcopal Church in April 2010, and pastored at Sealy Memorial AME Church for four years. From 2014 to the present I pastor at Allen Temple AME Church with great anticipation.

I, like the woman at the well, was seeking for things that could not satisfy, and then I heard my Savior speaking who said; draw from my well that will never run dry. Like Hannah, I bore my soul to the Lord and He blessed me with one son, Serge Samuel Phillips, who has been ministering in the church as a drummer since he was four years old. Like Queen Esther, I will go into the King for the peoples' sake, and if she perishes, I will perish.

I was elected as the President of the WDP Barbados movement in 2016 and to the WDPIC Executive Committee in 2017, as a Regional Rep for the CANA Region. I am presently serving for the second term as President/Chair of the Barbados Family Planning Association.



Lauren Wilks - lauren.wilks9@gmail.com

Canada

My name is Lauren Wilks and I am a 26-year-old student from St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. I am pursuing my Master of Arts in Applied Health Science degree, with a focus on history and sociology of sport, at Brock University in St. Catharines. I began attending the Baptist Church in my hometown with my friends when I was in grade 7 and became an active Church member in my community.

I joined the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada (WICC), the Canadian hub of WDP, in 2010. I have been a member of WICC for seven years and served five of those years as a Program Coordinator. I became the WDP Liaison in 2015 and this provided me with the opportunity to travel to Brazil in 2017 where I was elected to sit as the Regional Representative for the Caribbean/North America (CANA) region.

As a young woman, I had not had the opportunity to participate in WDP services before as I was often in school or working during the scheduled service. It was not until I joined WICC that I was given the opportunity to learn more about WDP and get involved with the Canadian service production. I am passionate about promoting the growth of WDP as a worldwide movement: I believe that the love of God reaches worldwide and that the power of prayer is unparalleled. Women around the world are making waves and it is my prayer that this organization would continue to support respect, equality, and justice for all.

EUROPE



Emmanuelle Bauer - wdp.european.delegates@gmail.com

Luxembourg

My name is Emmanuelle Bauer. I am 41 years old and single. I am a native of France, but I have been living in Luxembourg for more than 30 years. I have two brothers younger than me. I am working as a court clerk at the Trade Court. I speak French, German, English, and Luxembourgish and have some basic knowledge in Spanish.

I have been involved in WDP for about 20 years, my mom bringing me up in this movement. For the last 10 years I have been involved in our National Committee and I am, for the moment, the chairperson of our committee (elections were held in September 2016). Since my participation at my first Regional Meeting (in Strasbourg in 2005, if I remember right), I have been able to meet great women which have shown me the real meaning of WDP.

My vision for WDP is a world more equal and fairer for women. Convincing young women to join us and to see how great this organization is and to see how WDP can get more power to help more women around the world.



Senka Šestak Peterlin - kwai56@hotmail.co.uk

Croatia

I am from Zagreb, the capital of Croatia. I was born in 1962 in a protestant family and I have deep Baptist roots - my grand-grandfather was among the group of people who brought baptism to this area in the late 19th century. I am a widow and I have two sons.

I study the Croatian language and literature, currently working as an editor in a publishing company in Zagreb. I have been an author of chapter Art and the Bible of the book for the Religious Education in the school. I was the editor in chief of The Mirror - Christian magazine for woman. I am a longtime leader and author of creative workshops, summer and weekend programs for children and youth (as part of Scripture Union International team.) I have co-organized conferences, lectures and conducted thematic workshops for women at the Baptist Alliance, panel organizer and head of the literary and theological forum Christian Forum. I have longtime experience in running and organizing all sorts of events and have been active in writing project proposals (especially for WDP Croatia the last three years).

I became a member of WDP Croatia in 2010. I attended the WDP conference in New York where I met women from all over the world with the same goal and willing to share our faith, and got a picture what the WDP movement is all about. I was elected Vice-President of WDP Croatia in December 2012. Four years later I was elected President. Over the past years I have actively participated in numerous activities related to WDP, different women's programs and initiatives, participated in different civil rights activities, especially connected to women, children and people with disabilities. On behalf of WDP Croatia, as a leader, I stand for good relationships with the countries in the region, especially with Slovenia and Serbia. I am committed to ecumenism, crossing borders of nations and confessions, I appreciate different Christian traditions by doing the WDP work - prayer and action for peace and justice - on the national level connect it with the international level. I am a good motivator, full of (positive) energy with a lot of experience in work with youth and women as well as in training leaders.

LATIN AMERICA



Rebeca Cascante - dmo.rcascante@gmail.com

Costa Rica

Vengo de una familia costarricense humilde y trabajadora, de padres pastores por más de 45 años. Actualmente soy la Coordinadora del programa de Pastoral de Las Mujeres de CEDEPCA en Costa Rica, ya por 18 años. Soy Psicóloga y Pastora de llamamiento y corazón. He realizado diversos cursos en Biblia, teología, el ministerio de la mujer, psicología pastoral, predicación, y estudios feministas.

Trabajé como co-pastora en una congregación local en San José y fui coordinadora nacional del programa de la mujer a nivel denominación. Además, he participado en una serie de intercambios de iglesia y eventos internacionales en los EE.UU., México, Centroamérica, Ecuador, Perú, Brasil, Escocia y China. Trabaje como Psicóloga en el albergue para mujeres agredidas del Instituto Nacional para las Mujeres.

Por 18 años he coordinado en Costa Rica el DMO, que ha sido de bendición personal y para el ministerio en general, pero sobre todo para las mujeres participantes. Me inspira conocer nuevas realidades que nos retan siempre a construir caminos de solidaridad, respeto y amor por la creación. En el 2012 quede como coordinadora de la región de AL del DMO y esta experiencia ha enriquecido mi conocimiento e importancia del movimiento del DMO.

Mi compromiso con el DMO será seguir motivando para que más mujeres de la región se integren a la celebraciones mundiales y puedan enriquecer sus vidas al abrir sus ojos a la diversidad que Dios ha creado, compartir nuestras experiencias y usar nuestros dones en todo lo que posibilite la oración activa ante las realidades humanas como una pequeña semilla de esperanza. Vislumbro el movimiento del DMO con comités establecidos y fortalecidos, regional y localmente y con mujeres jóvenes integrándose y asumiendo un liderazgo renovador y comprometido con acciones de justicia y paz en sus países que se conviertan en una oración agradable a Dios.



Esther Susana Menke Renner - susanarenner@uol.com.br

Brazil

Brasileña, 61 años, casada, madre de dos hijos, y abuela de cuatro nietos. Profesora da Lengua Español en escuelas del estado. Vivo en la ciudad de Santa Rosa RS. Soy de la Iglesia Evangélica Congregacional del Brasil. Conozco y participo del movimiento del Día Mundial de Oración 20 años. Fui por dos gestiones presidente del DMO Brasil y ahora elemento de enlace con la internacional. DMO

me permite conocer de cerca el trabajo ecuménico donde tengo experiencias maravillosas.

Desde 2009 soy secretaria de América Latina en el Comité Ejecutivo de la Confraternidad Congregacional Internacional. También fui secretaria del departamento de mujeres de AIPRAL (Iglesias Presbiterianas y Reformadas de América Latina) del año 2000 a 2007. Como también integrante de la comisión local de nuestra iglesia de mujeres como, presidente, secretaria y consejo fiscal. Mi objetivo siempre es incentivar a las mujeres para orar, aproximar las mujeres de varias razas y culturas. Conocer las historias y luchas de cada una. La oración es tan necesaria en nuestra vida espiritual como lo es respirar. Dios es un Padre que nos ama, y con la oración nosotros participamos de su amor y nos llena de bendiciones. La oración da frutos, no sólo con uno mismo sino con los demás, nos hace crecer en el amor a Dios. Es necesario orar y orar frecuentemente. La oración tiene que nos llevar a la acción. Que seamos mujeres de paz y bien estar y saber que somos muchas y que no vivimos aisladas.

MIDDLE EAST



Maral Haidostian - maralhaidostian@yahoo.com

Lebanon

Maral Barzkian Haidostian is an Armenian Lebanese woman, born in 1970, in Aleppo, Syria. She belongs to the Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East, and has been representing her Church at the WDP–Lebanon since 2006, and chaired the committee for a total of nine years. She has attended the WDPIC meetings in 2003 and 2017. Additionally, she is responsible for the work of the WDP worship services (women and children) in her church.

She holds a bachelor degree in Christian Education and a Teaching Diploma from the Haigazian University and the Near East School of Theology, both in Beirut. Her passion is working with children and helping them to grow in the Christian faith. She is a Bible teacher, and has prepared the Bible curriculum in the Armenian language for the elementary 4th, 5th, and 6th grades. She has been a Sunday school coordinator and also heads the joint Sunday schools of the Armenian Evangelical Churches.

Since 2003, the joint Sunday schools of the Armenian Evangelical Churches regularly celebrate the WDP children's worship program, and in the past few years, some of the Sunday schools of the Armenian Orthodox churches have joined them. In 2003, the world prayed for Lebanon with the theme "Holy Spirit Fill Us". Maral headed the sub-committee that wrote the children's program. She is married to Paul Haidostian, an ordained minister and a university president. She has two daughters, Garin and Talar.



Nora Carmi - noracarmi11@gmail.com

Palestine

I am a Palestinian Christian, born in Jerusalem, Palestine, only a few months before the establishment of the state of Israel. As a refugee in my own city, my Armenian roots strongly anchored in faith, and my education in Catholic schools and Protestant universities equipped me to dedicate my life to community-building and the holistic empowerment of the human being through voluntary work in civil society, church-related organizations and international movements.

After serving for 38 years professionally at the YWCA, Sabeel Liberation Theology Center and Kairos Palestine to help build a healthy, responsible and democratic society, I am now retired but I continue to promote a just peace for the land termed Holy but also globally throughout the world.

My involvement with the WDP movement started when I was a young reader in Jerusalem. In 1991, the late Patriarch Torkom Manouguian officially nominated me as the representative of my Armenian community on the WDP Committee Palestine that wrote the service for 1994 "Come, See and Act". Since then, I have not stopped to actively promote the WDP movement both locally and internationally. In 2003, I was the keynote speaker at the WDP Quadrennial in Swanwick, UK and I continue to deliver homilies and talks on prayerful action as a tool for a just peace and a means to connect with the women of the writing countries of the WDP services.

Since 2012, and with Camelia Basta (2012-2017) from Egypt, I had been one of the representatives of the Middle East on the Executive Committee. I feel blessed to continue finding ways of building bridges between WDP and the global efforts of finding ways to preserve the divine image of God in every single human being.

PACIFIC



Vicki Marney - vicki@gmp.org.au

Australia

I have participated in WDP for the past 21 years, currently serving as Vice President on the State Committee. In 2017, I have been elected as Pacific Region representative, and invited to take up the position of Vice President of WDPIC, serving as a member of the Executive Committee of the World Day of Prayer, International Committee.

I am thankful for God's blessings on my life, married and blessed with 3 daughters and my first grandchild. I am passionate about promoting the leading role of women and women's fellowship organizations in transforming churches and communities. Empowering and enabling women, through prayerful action, to bring about change in communities in need. This is demonstrated in my current role, with the Australian Churches of Christ, which sees me engaging individuals and congregations in Global Mission initiatives.

As the Regional Representative for WDP, my focus is to "build a vibrant, sustainable WDP organization, engaging women of all ages, to make a difference, in their local communities in the Pacific Region." As Vice President and member of the Executive Committee WDPIC, I am humbled to serve using my skills given by God.

I believe that each one of us can make a difference in the world in which we live, thru prayerful action, bringing peace and justice. God can use women like you and me to shine the light of Christ in our communities.



Henrica Nio Marona- henrica.marona@gmail.com

Cook Islands

I am a mother and a grandmother to five children, 11 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren. I am a Catholic woman. I am the president of the Catholic Women of our Parish, St. Joseph's cathedral, and also Vice President of the Cook Islands National Council of Women.

I have been involved in the WDP movement for quite a long time. In 2012 I was elected as President. It was during this time that for the first time the Cook Islands were in the WDP Journal and will continue to be. The WDP is now being exposed in our country and getting good participation from all angles of life, family, young men and women. My vision for WDP is that we continue the spirit of unity among our different denominations, to hold Bible studies to support our family lives and especially our youth that need help. To share the spirit of WWDP young women are an active part in this organization.

List of International Meeting Participants

Africa Region	First Name	Last Name
Angola	Diavava Jaquelina	Deus
Angola	Ana	Alfredo Vongula
Angola	Chemba	Geraldina E. C. Chianeque
Botswana	Agnes	Ncaagae
Botswana	Tlamelo	Kebatenne
Cameroon	Henriette	Mbatchou
Cameroon	Catherine	Akale
Côte d'Ivoire	Nana Marcelline	N'Dehou Epse Beda
Democratic R. of the Congo	Rose	Biasima Lala
Gabon	Elisabeth	Ovono Metou
Gabon	Rosalie	Akoue ep Adze
Gabon	Ingozi Mathouet	ep Tigoue
Ghana	Edith	Essel
Ghana	Joyce Larko	Steiner
Ghana	Johanna	Akyeampong
Ghana	Bernice	Appianing Agyeman
Kenya	Karen Wacu	Ngigi
Kenya	Hellen	Kaario Mbaine
Kenya	Alice	Abok
Liberia	Meatta	Hage
Liberia	Gloria	Hage
Nigeria	Nnemoa	Florence N Uche
Nigeria	Gertrude	Oyedeji-Edwards
Nigeria	Eunice	Onyeukwu Kalu
Republic of Congo	Odette Judith	Loubacky Nee Bikouta
Republic of Congo	Eléonore Liévine	Bouanga Kissadi
South Africa	Joa	van Aarde
South Africa	Gwendoline	Mokoena
South Africa	Manon	Naidoo
Zambia	Queen	Chisha
Zimbabwe	Sylvia	Marowa
Asia Region	First Name	Last Name
Hong Kong	Tin Pui	Ching
Hong Kong	Sau Wan	Shek
India	Moumita	Biswas
India	Hungreiphy	Zimik Awungshi
India	Samma	Varghese
Japan	Megumi	Maejima
Japan	Hara	Mayumi
Malaysia	Krishnaveni	Narayanasamy

Philippines	Dorothy	Castro
Singapore	Vijaya	Varantheni
Singapore	Su Chin	Lai Ivy
South Korea	Shin "Mi Sook"	Mi Suk
Sri Lanka	Vino	Schubert
Sri Lanka	Vasanth	Ariyasingham
Taiwan	Ping	Lee
Taiwan	Pei-Ti	Chu Chang
Taiwan	Nancy	Lin
Thailand	Dr. Sirirat	Pusurinkham

Caribbean-North America Region	First Name	Last Name
Bahamas	Sister Annie	Thompson
Bahamas	Deborah	Barry
Barbados	Alison	Carter
Barbados	Ruth	V. E. Phillips
Barbados	Carolyn	Clarke
Canada	Marilyn A.	Fortin
Canada	Lauren	Wilks
Canada	Catherine	MacKeil
Guyana	June	Samuels
Guyana	Donnette	Ritchie
Guyana	Cashanna	Samuels
Jamaica	Patricia	Pennant
Jamaica	Sonia	May Young nee Morgan
Suriname	Wendey	Riedewald
Suriname	Rosana	Pindon
Suriname	Vanara	Egers-Lioe-A-Joe
Trinidad & Tobago	Janice	Soyer-Delaney
Trinidad & Tobago	Anna	Sharma
Trinidad & Tobago	Anupa	Nanan
United States	Susan	Jackson Dowd
United States	Mary	Martin
United States	Marilyn	Pagan-Banks
United States	Samantha	Figueroa
United States	Rosangela	Oliveira
Europe Region	First Name	Last Name
Austria	Ulrike	Bechmann
Albania	Merita	Meko
Albania	Floresha	Cenolli
Austria	Brigitte	Zinnburg
Austria	Brigitte	Maria Hany
Belgium	Veronica	Kuchenbecker Van Hattem

Croatia	Senka	Sestak Peterlin
Czech Republic	Sara	Lindrova
Denmark	Inge-Lise	Lollike
Denmark	Lene	Johnson
EWNI	Kathleen	Skinner
EWNI	Elizabeth Louise	Bowes
EWNI	Elizabeth	Burroughs
France	Nicola	Kontzi-Meresse
France	Laurence	Gangloff
France	Helene	Noyer ep Bertrand
France	Dorothy May	White
France	Christine	Mear
Germany	Mona	Kuntze
Germany	Irene	Tokarski
Germany	Lore	Raudonat
Greece	Sona	Galstyan
Ireland	Jean	Kenny
Ireland	Major Gillian	Dicker
Italy	Marisa	Mastrototaro
Lithuania	Audrone	Dauksaite-Timpe
Luxembourg	Emmanuelle	Bauer
Netherlands	Inge	Mol
Netherlands	Maria "Rietje"	den Hollander e/v de Vreeze
Portugal	Maria Dulce	Matos Pereira
Romania	Szilardka	Baczoni
Romania	Edith Hajnalka	Toth
Scotland	Ruth	Laing
Scotland	Marjorie	Paton
Serbia	Marija	Parnicki
Slovakia	Jarmila	Cihová
Slovenia	Natasa	Egic
Slovenia	Corinna	Harbig
Slovenia	Tanja	Povsnar
Sweden	Esther	Hawa Rebecka Kazen
Sweden	Ragni	Lantz
Switzerland	Irene	Schwyter-Aebi
Switzerland	Silke	Von Grunigen Petermann
Switzerland	Brigitte	Haldimann-Stettler
Latin America Region	First Name	Last Name
Argentina	Gladys	Gomer
Argentina	Eduvigen	Frida Schebela
Argentina	Patricia	Groeting
Argentina	Laura	Gattinoni

Bolivia	Claudia Lola	Montes de Oca Ayala
Brazil	Esther Susana	Menke Renner
Brazil	Leda	Muller Witter
Brazil	Christina	Takatsu Winnischofer
Brazil	Grietje	Couperus
Brazil	Sonia	do Nascimento Palmeira
Brazil	Ione	Martins
Brazil	Dirce	Schitkoski
Brazil	Leila	De Jesus Barbosa
Brazil	Margarida Fatima	Souza Ribeiro
Brazil	Angela	Soares de Oliveira
Brazil	Marilda	Macieira de Medeiros
Brazil	Ani Scheila F.	Kummer
Brazil	Ivana Maria	Ribeiro de Aguiar Garcia
Brazil	Wilhelmina	Kieckbusch
Brazil	Marcia Furrier	Guedelha Blasi
Brazil	Sarah	de Roure
Brazil	Marilia	Schuller
Chile	Nertiz del Carmen	Lobos Adriaola
Chile	Misci Miriam	Castro Diaz
Chile	Maria Trinidad	Urzúa Arias
Chile	Maria Elena	Marquez Romero
Colombia	Elsa Nayibe	Lara Mayorga
Costa Rica	Rebeca	Cascante-Gomez
Costa Rica	Leticia	Calderon Moya
Costa Rica	Marjorie	Gonzalez Aguilar
Costa Rica	Silvia	Regina Lima e Silva
Cuba	Noemi	Manrique Arango
Cuba	Ruth Mariet	Trueba Castro
Cuba	Dora	Arce Valentin
Dominican Republic	Juana	Hernandez de Vicente
Guatemala	Bianka	Paz
Honduras	Angelica	Lopez
Mexico	Esther	Mendoza Quintanilla
Mexico	Ana Isabel	Gamboa Hernandez
Nicaragua	Nora	Montenegro
Panama, R.P.	Edevina	Herrera
Panama, R.P.	Patricia	McKenzie
Paraguay	María Ester	Durks
Paraguay	Maria de Lourdes	Gonzales de Kruger
Paraguay	Mariela	Bohl
Paraguay	Mabel Candelaria	Torres de Gutierrez
Uruguay	Monica Graciela	Hillmann

Uruguay	Maria del Lujan	Leon Gularte
Venezuela	Maria	Jiménez de Ramírez
Venezuela	Coromoto	Jimenez de Salazar
Middle East Region	First Name	Last Name
Egypt	Camelia	Basta
Egypt	Dalia	Alfred Hanna
Egypt	Evon	Said
Lebanon	Maral	Barzkian Haidostian
Lebanon	Laura	Abdallah
Palestine	Nora Nobar	Carmi
Palestine	Sally	Ibrahim Ajar
Pacific Region	First Name	Last Name
Aotearoa/New Zealand	Pauline	McKay
Aotearoa/New Zealand	Zella	McGirr
Australia	Jill	Whitehouse
Australia	Vicki	Marney
Australia	Janice	Peddersen
Cook Islands	Te Upoko	Tuariki
Cook Islands	Henrica	Nio Marona
Cook Islands	Mary	Soatini
Fiji	Salanieta	Naucabalavu
New Caledonia	Eurimindia	Loelia
New Caledonia	Helene	Wete ep Frait
Samoa	Elizabeth	Lanuola Asiata
Samoa	Fetaiai Pepa	Mona
Tonga	Anne	Lizqina Lehauli
Tonga	Katea	Lutui

Weaving Together the Conversations

We, the participants, traveled from all corners of God's given home – the earth. We were women and young women from the seven regions of the world. It was an intergenerational conversation! We came from the Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant traditions. It was an ecumenical dialogue! We shared our stories, we heard the pain of God's creation, we listened to God's words and as women of faith we grow stronger in our commitment for transformation. It was a prayer and action moment! In the midst of the environmental crisis, climate change, exploitation, violence, and xenophobia, we insisted on the goodness of creation. Goodness to be recovered through our prophetic-transforming action. "All God's creation is very good!"

Focused on the life giving strategies of Quilombolas, in Brazil, or Maroon, in Suriname, we got inspiration in women's leading role in the transmission of knowledge and community values to tie together food security and sustainable local development. We learned with each other!

In the Mayan cosmology, forests and lands are sacred, and the earth is the mother where the home and garden are for the community's co-existence and collective work. We are to take care of our mother earth!

The parallels between the destruction of the Earth and the evils of anthropocentrism with oppression, racism and discrimination, came out when confronted by eco-feminist theology. We see it clear now! Over fishing! Plastic shopping bags, fertilized seeds, carbon-monoxide generators, wood and charcoal fuel, stone crushing, waste disposal, deforestation, non-ecological office supplies, human trafficking - all came into light as we named the ecological context of our communities. Women are boycotting, campaigning, recycling, gardening, petitioning, rallying, changing life styles, advocating, educating, shopping responsibly, holding vigils to raise awareness, even abstaining from eating fish during certain seasons. We are for environmental justice!

Humans move from one place to another, and sometimes they are called refugees and they are living in camps, unemployed, subject to violence, and always vulnerable. Inclusiveness! What a witness, we engage with our churches and non-governmental organizations. One young woman from each of the seven regions lead the unity in prayer and action through art, social media, and song to reflect on their experience and to emphasize the value of those practices to reach out to young people for an intergenerational movement. A friendship across the globe flourished!



Japanese women wear kimonos in hope of peace and reconciliation, including amongst women in the region where the violence of war has left a wound. In a small group, stories of conflict and violence were shared. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called daughters of God.

In the exchange about women leadership roles in the churches, we could see that women are the backbone of the churches in their respective parishes and homes, even when the patriarchal structure limits the public role of women in worship and hierarchal functions. Women's empowerment is still a blessing to churches!

Children's rights are human rights and it should be the focus of the children's ministry. This is being acknowledged as we nurture and care for children. Church, home, and government agencies must work together to transform the life of children.

In a pilot project with young women, a research demonstrated that less structured and interactive event, where young women can contribute their knowledge and is relationship driven, may be more successful than traditional lecturing meetings. Keep that in mind!

The environmental crisis is also a crisis of global justice. God's justice always meant loving and sacrificial self-giving. We, as Christians cannot be silent. We live with the hope and belief that people have the means, and increasingly, the will to focus on justice, peace, and integrity of creation.

To recycle is to give a new use to objects, thus reducing the consumption of resources that may degrade the planet. We may use the way we do WDP activities to educate and campaign for climate justice. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle! Simple as that!

What a precious opportunity to listen the writer countries! Philippines, Suriname, Slovenia and Zimbabwe, each one gave a glimpse into the theme and the situation of their country. We are enthusiastic about the programs!

A question to Katharina von Bora - Can you see any similarities between the women in the Reformation Movement and the women in the Word Day of Prayer? She may say that the Reformation Movement rediscovered the value of women and we can add that through *Informed Prayer*. *Prayerful Action* for peace and justice, WDP women live out solidarity.

Prayerful actions

- ✓ Support the communities by disseminating the information that communities want to share about the threats upon them and their environment;
- ✓ Raise support by promoting connections between different communities with common environmental challenges;
- ✓ Promote global awareness by engaging with communities, building solidarity, participating and strengthening the alliances between the Churches and women's groups;
- ✓ Wear black on Thursday to say NO to rape and gender based violence.



Opening Celebration – Meditation

Genesis 1 - Seeking Wisdom to Care for God's Creation

Silvia Regina de Lima Silva



In the beginning... To open this reflection, I invite you to revisit that place, the place of the beginning.

The beginning, which in the text appears as “the beginning of creation”, but which in the text itself, and in our lives, can be the search for meaning - the search for purpose. At any given time in our history, we stop to ask ourselves about the beginning, the meaning of life, as we will see as we study the text.

Sometimes, reflecting, placing our hearts beyond that beginning helps us understand or seek new ways to understand what we are experiencing at this particular moment in time. And every time we revisit the beginning, we find a different meaning, because our questions about life, about reality, are also different according to the different stages of our existence, and the various personal and social contexts in which we approach the text. We will have two moments to work with this text from Genesis. First, at this celebratory time, and then tomorrow, during the Bible study.

At this time we will focus on a doorway, two important places, and three messages in the text:

The lock and key to enter the text: Let us enter slowly, in silence, and listen to the wisdom of those who speak in the text. The text dates back to the exile in Babylon. Behind such beautiful poetry, there are exiled people, people who have been deported, uprooted, far away from their land, their people, their culture and their religion. This is a well-known reality for many of those of you who are here today. They are people living in exile (Ezekiel 3.15), by the rivers (Psalms 137.1); they are called servants (Isaiah 42.1); peoples that have been massacred by Babylonian imperialism. In a context where the god of the Empire justifies slavery, it was important to recover and state the following: “our God is the creator of everything,” and that same God transforms chaos of oppression in a beautiful, inhabitable world, in a household that human beings inhabit.

Reminders: The questions and the standpoints, from which we approach this text,

- We approach the text of the world's creation **amid the environmental crisis, the climate crisis**, and global warming. We stick our hands in a filthy world, filled with lots of waste, a world in a state of destruction. A creation that moans and groans: polluted water, contaminated land, appropriated in the hands of a few people who ruthlessly exploit it.

- We approach the text **from our own bodies**, the bodies of women of faith, who come together from all over the world to pray and be strengthened to transform. Let us not let the text slip through our fingers, our lives. Let us let it sift through our bodies, our everyday experiences, our concerns, and into the joy, the happiness, and the hope that wakes us every morning. As women readers of the text, we want to be challenged about our responsibilities, and also about the role we have played in the created world –too often relegated to a role of aids and rescuers from the disasters caused by the patriarchy (the transforming strength of women).

The text inspires us:

1- God's creation is good – “And God saw that it was good.”

(Let us repeat [this] with our sisters from Suriname), and now in our own language.

The hermeneutical perspective that runs through the text is [that of] hope. Hope proclaimed, affirmed, and experienced amid pain, the denial of life, and chaos. The beginning of creation is not evil or sin; creation is good. All beings created by God are good. Let us think and feel for a brief moment the prophetic and transforming strength in this statement: “[All] creation is good”. The goodness of creation as a whole and of human beings as a part of creation is one of the major contributions of the Jewish-Christian tradition. We get lost in a world of sin, prohibition and guilt, and we forget the beginning of goodness in creation. We as women, we are part of the goodness in creation. In every people, every culture, every religion, this goodness is manifested in colors, flavors, movements, customs, religions, cultures, stories; the diversity represented here is part of the goodness and the beauty of creation. Everything is so good that it does not seem real. And some religions, and even some churches, create (make up) a threatening god that we fear, that controls our lives and prevents us from enjoying the grace and goodness of creation.

“And God saw that it was good.” Like our brothers and sisters in exile in Babylon, we also affirm the goodness of creation amid evil, environmental destruction, and social injustice. We affirm [its] goodness as a word of hope, a prophetic word that poses a challenge; goodness we need to recover through our prophetic and transforming action.

2. There was chaos, confusion and darkness, and “the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters”

The chaos from the beginning connects us with the situation of injustice, exploitation, and deportation suffered by the people of Israel in Babylon. In the fashion of a poem that is almost like a song, the text leads us through each day during creation. But let us go back to chaos, to the chaos from the beginning, which is also our constant company in daily life. Environmental disorder, the degradation that turns the earth and the water into commodities owned by small groups that expel peasants, indigenous populations, and ancestral communities from their lands and jeopardize food security, uprooting [local] cultures and religions. Conflicts on the border that create the term “refugees”, refugees in a land that belongs to everyone, that prevents a large group of women, men, and children from becoming citizens of the world. Chaos - disorder in the injustices of not acknowledging the basic, minimum rights of workers. The unstoppable advances of capital, which touches the bodies of girls, women, and young people who are the victims of different forms of violence and are subject to human trafficking and profiteering.

And a breath of God, the ‘ruah’, the ‘giant-mother-bird’, fluttered her wings and hovered over chaos. The spirit of God, the ‘ruah’, is feminine; chaos is transformed by the stimulating breath of the Divinity. It is the She-Spirit that transforms chaos, that invigorates, that from chaos gives life to creation, or a new creation. This same Spirit is the one that sustains the created world.

The experience of creation is something we can very easily relate to our bodies, to our lives as women. It is an experience that is not limited to those who have chosen motherhood. Creating, and being creators, has to do with our hands, with our common responsibility in the sustainability of the created world. The invisibility of women’s work in patriarchal society demands that every woman assume her role as participant in the creating work of God, as possessor of the spirit, of the ‘giant-mother-bird’ that flutters over and goes into the deepest of the chaotic history we are living through, and from there it is capable of transforming it in a place of life, recovering the goodness of the created universe. This is how we recover our lives, in our communities of faith and love, in the lives of other women who have lost the joy of living with dignity and passion. This is where we recover the sovereignty of the breath of God that continues to create and keep us in its “unruly” and serene spirit.

3. Our accountability and involvement: conviviality as a path of wisdom to care for creation

The third lesson to be learned from the Genesis text is the call to be accountable, to assume our involvement as we seek to care for creation.

The hegemonic version of modernity leads us to breaking with a more holistic, comprehensive thought that relates us with the universe, the cosmos. An individualistic thought has been imposed, so dominant that it prevents any other understanding of life and the universe. This individualistic thought is also imposed on our relationship with God. We are made in God's image and likeness, and we are part of the universe, but our individualistic thought has drawn us apart from the rest of the created beings and also from God by affirming the existence of a God that is outside and above us, and not the God that we bring along and all human beings bring along (we will look deeper into this tomorrow). An individualistic faith, that seeks personal salvation, is not enough. We are being challenged to rediscover meaning in life and meaning in our Christian faith based on a new understanding of our role as women and part of creation, and based on new images of God. Prayer, which is part of the principles of those of us present here, means listening to God through our neighbor and through the moans and groans of nature. It also means being part of the caring hands of the God who continues to create, from chaos, as Spirit that unsettles and transforms. Our relationship with the created world is a deep and intimate connection; it is one of partnership and interdependence. As we will see tomorrow, an anthropocentric and androcentric reading of Genesis has prevented us from feeling part of the creatures together with the creatures. We are being called to care for and are cared for by the rest of the created beings. Human arrogance mistook stewardship for domination. And the dominion-depredation attitude in the man-nature relationship is what we find in colonialisms and neocolonialism's that expropriate lands and concentrate it in the hands of a few dominant groups; it is in the sexism that abuses the lives of women and girls. We will find it in other different forms of domination that have been interjected, and even reproduced among us, women.

This is the invitation for today: to recover our original creational relationship, our connection and interdependence with [all] created beings, our communion with the Divinity that inhabits us, of whom we are made in image and likeness; the Divinity that inhabits the other beings, born of the Divinity's word.

Our commitment and expressions of faith are as a community. We embrace the care for creation as part of our Jewish-Christian faith tradition. The environmental situation poses a challenge for us. From the environmental point of view, we cannot be saved in isolation; either all of us are saved together or together we will perish. The exiled, the migrants, the peasants deprived of their land find in us a role of commitment and solidarity.

Let care and love be part of our involvement and accountability in the search for new paths of conviviality.

Bible Study – Genesis 1 Seeking Wisdom to Care for God’s Creation

Silvia Regina de Lima Silva

In this morning study, we will continue with our reflection during worship. We will delve deeper into some aspects mentioned yesterday and some other that come up from that same reflection.

Genesis 1 is in the literary form of a poem and employs repetition as a way of communicating a world order desired by God. Repetition is also the structure that holds all things together, each [blessing] linked to another. In this order we find that the world is good, that [all] creation is good. We can rest in the arms of a reliable world, the fruit of its creator’s desire, a home that has been lovingly prepared for each one of its creatures. It is a world populated by diverse beings. Diversity can be one of the most beautiful and attractive characteristics of creation - a world of diversity where different beings can respectfully and amicably coexist. It is order arising out of the diversity of all created beings. We can believe in this order, in this meaning of creation, and rely upon it.



Let us experience for a moment this connection among ourselves and with the rest of the created beings.

Exercise #1: Give and receive energy through our hands.

Let us not detach ourselves from the entryway to the text. The background to the text, the exile, the migrant’s situation away from his/her land. Being away from our land. Let us contemplate our present reality that we heard about yesterday, the current state of affairs, contamination, hoarding, and destruction of the earth.

About the way of speaking: Let’s go back to the form. Through its verses, the text brings us hope again, hope in a new land, where it is possible to live together in respect, equality and harmony, embracing the differences among the different.

[The text] uses poetry to warm our hearts and move us to action, as Milton Schwantes, Brazilian Bible scholar, puts it. The texts were written in times when the people’s existence and possession of the land were being questioned, that is, during the exile in Babylon. We cannot read this text without bearing in mind the land, its fruit, the peoples relationship to it, and any conflict around it.

We will look deeper into some aspects of the text, and upon doing so, we will be driven by our aim to seek the wisdom that will lead us to new ways of caring, of solidarity, and coexistence.

1. Faith in a creator God and the word that creates

Genesis 1 must be approached within the context of the first eleven chapters of Genesis. In Genesis 1, creation is a Divine initiative; it is not the result of fighting or punishment. Creating is putting an end to chaos, to disorder/injustice situations, as we discussed yesterday.

It is important to look at this insistence on the goodness of creation as part of the cry of the poor for justice, for a life with dignity for themselves and for nature. In seeking to take on our responsibility, it is important for us to listen to the words of the victims. They carry a kind of wisdom that is a prophetic cry,

because they themselves are a cry that condemns the forms of oppression and injustice. At the same time, they affirm, without a doubt, that another world is possible.

For the people exiled in Babylon and those impoverished that stayed in the land, faith in the creator God opens paths of life and hope. The saddest thing that can happen to a group of people is having lost hope, or their hope failing to move them to action, to transformation. If this is the case, faith is nothing but deceit, a sort of opium that keeps our conscience numb, our mouth shut, and our hands tied. But that is not what happens in the Biblical experience. The creator God gives us, women, created in God's image and likeness, the role of co-creators, in charge of taking history in our hands and creating, and re-creating. This means that the future is open, that the neoliberal market's utilitarian vision on nature, the land, and the rivers does not have the last word. The future is open.

In verse 3, when the light and the darkness are separated, new dimensions of space and time are opened that enable the development of the act of creation during the following days, in a period of 6, and finally 7 days, which the author highlights for reasons we will look at further on.

Our creator God reminds us that we are all God's creatures, in a horizontal and reciprocal relationship.

The created world precedes human beings and we should receive it as a gift. We are called to have a receptive attitude, to know how to receive from other creatures.

The creation through the word shows creation as an act of freedom, of dialogic nature. The word is the creator. The creator God acts by the force of God's word. We, women, created in God's image and likeness, take part in the creational ministry and are called to be transformed by the force of our word.

Exercise #2: Our source - words that create words that reinvigorate

(We are a well, a fountain, and the headwaters of a river)

2. In God's image and likeness

Men and women are created in God's image and likeness. What does it mean to be created in God's image and likeness? (Discuss problems of interpretation that get different texts mixed up). We are stewards of the created world and called to a life of interrelation and care for the rest of the created beings, in the same way they care for us. In God's image and likeness or tyrannical lords? There is no traditional division of roles where "be[ing] fruitful and multiplying" is [a task] assigned to women and subduing and ruling over the earth—with all the ideological load that this has entailed—is a male function. These verses have been approached in the context of conquest, colonization and capitalist interests, even though other systems have also been unable to overcome this ideologized vision of the masculine and the feminine and its link to domination. The use of this text in Western industrial society has been driven by economic interests and a major desire for power.

For exiles, becoming a great and strong people by growing and multiplying their descendants might be a form of resistance. Today, we need to find new approaches that are connected to our everyday experience and may grant these words a new meaning.

The text calls us to rebuild our everyday life, to re-imagine the life of the clan, the community. The entire verse refers to the collective, "let us make," "man and woman."

We are God's image, as women, as men, and in our relationships. And, as God's image, we cannot be complicit to subjection and domination of men over women. Are we, women, truly convinced that we are "God's image"?

'Man and woman' does not imply an individualistic vision, but again refers to the collective.

The entire clan, the whole *oikos*, the common household is God's image. Humankind is integrated to the environment, in solidarity among people and animals –they are such close friends that they were created on the same day.

3. Images of God gleaned from the text

God creates with freedom and calls us to freedom – When the people affirm creation as the work of their God, the God of the exiles, the deported, they are also affirming they do not believe in Marduk, the god of the Babylonian empire, and that it does not have the last word. In the Babylonian empire, stars were divinities; they were worshipped. The main sanctuary was devoted to the sun. [These were] divine symbols: the gods of light: the sun, the moon, and the stars. Our text introduces the creation of lights in the beginning (on the first and fourth day).

Humankind was not created to be enslaved by the gods, and God's name shall not be used to subjugate and enslave other peoples, like it happened in Babylon and, sadly, repeatedly in the history of Christianity in Latin America and other continents. The goal of creation is God's image, which is transmitted from generation to generation, to live together amicably. The dynamic nature of human freedom is paramount, and it is presented in an original manner in this ancient story.

The God of life and the care for life: the danger of idolatry – The text strengthens our commitment toward an economy that values life over profit. The earth and the creatures that inhabit the created world are not the property of anybody. The God that we find in the text manifests himself/herself against the systems of domination. That is why serving that God is incompatible with serving the market, the patriarchy as a system of domination, and the interests of racist societies; all this is idolatry. One more aspect of the caregiving God: it is important to be aware of the immediate relationship that is established between care and women. Caring is a Divine mandate for men and women. We need to reframe associations that have been established during our whole lives and that some attempt to justify with their interpretation of certain Bible texts.

4. A day of rest – We are free – God is freedom – reject fundamentalism

Genesis 1 is a way into the conversations, feelings and desires of our exiled brothers and sisters. Somehow, this might have been one of their topics of conversation or a strategy for their struggles for freedom. That is how we get to the day of rest, and this includes women's right to rest.

The work of creation was done in six days, and on the seventh day God finished the work, rested and made it holy. It was very important for that group of people to recover their culture, their religious traditions, and their relationship with time. We know from the history of black slavery, and other systems of domination, that the colonization of time is a form of robbing the people of their memory, of preventing them from maintaining their roots. After that appropriation, all other dimensions of life are dominated. For this reason, it was very important for this community of exiles to recover their time, to recover the seventh day as a resting day, a holy day. This is an issue that must run through our bodies, as women. Our relationship with time, with resting, with opening our lives to that space of nothingness, of resting that allows us to even think differently, a break from our routine to re-create ourselves. When was the last time you rested? How did you feel? Because, sometimes we even feel guilty about it.

Resting goes against rhythm, against the rhythm of exploitation. Resting is breaking free from slavery. Resting calls upon memory; singing and psalms come up in these circumstances (Psalms 98, 137; Isaiah 42.10-13). It is an important time to recover the memory of peoples, of families. Resting is for everyone. In other texts from the Old Testament, we can find the importance of rest for the earth and the animals, in addition to human rest.

Therefore, the Sabbath is a special day set aside for resistance, for organizing hope, a means of liberation.

Exercise #3: We engage in the experience of resting, of believing and resting in the goodness of creation. We surrender, feel and trust one another, relax.

5. Wisdom and hope – New words about such ancient issues

To conclude this introduction to the study of the text, in Genesis 1: 2, 4 we see a text that, reflecting on creation, helps us to organize our hope. Being a mythical story, it offers a wide range of interpretation. Our suggestion to you in this couple of days is an invitation to be conscious of our interconnection with the rest of the created beings, contemplate our status as creatures and enjoy it, and live in our hope in life's concreteness amid historical conflict, knowing that there is no hope without solidarity. And the wisdom we gain from this text reinforces the invitation to assume our accountability and joy in rebuilding our common home.

Exercise #4: Leaving our home, looking for someone who speaks a different language or, that for any external sign we perceive as different to us, and approaching her to express our love and thankfulness for sharing this space.

Exercise #5: Wisdom in conversation – group work:

- Words of wisdom for the care of creation:
What aspect in the text can I relate with the most? What would I like to gain from the text?
- Prophecy for transformation:
From social and environmental standpoints, what challenges and what hopes does the text present us with?
- Feeling and reflecting on the text as women, what do I like (in the text)? What do I dislike?
What do I need?

Exercise #6: A universal and cosmic embrace

Silvia Regina de Lima Silva (Brazil)

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Bible Study - Proverbs 31:10-31

Dora Arce-Valentin

Introduction

Greetings... who am I: mother, daughter, sister, aunt, someday a grandma, although I see a sort of sympathetic look in my children's eyes when I talk about it...

I am not a Bible Scholar but as a good Reformed pastor I believe in what a very old slogan of the Reformers in France said 500 years ago, "Every Christian is a Pope with a Bible in her or his hands!" or something like that.

The methodology I will be using is something that I learned from the Latin American Bible Scholar Elsa Tamez. I love the way Elsa creates stories around the Bible Texts that connect the biblical context with ours, using a more personal (but not individualistic) approach of the story; especially the stories where women are the protagonists. So, this morning I will be bringing you greetings from a woman we know from the Bible, a woman with no specific name nevertheless, very often used as an example of how we should behave if we want to be called, as her, a righteous one.

On the other hand, I will share with you some information that will help us to understand the story. As Silvia Regina Silva was saying on Monday, a kind of key that will open the door to the biblical narrative in order to prepare us to dance with the Spirit of God, creating a sort of collective wisdom in the midst of the chaos. As we all agreed in yesterday's Bible Study: the order of the Creation is movement and is diversity. Let us go for it!

I was thinking about the best way to facilitate the process of stepping over that door and engage the biblical text. So, it came to my mind a memory of a Cuban stand-up comedian who used a hat in his performances as a tool to engage the audience. He always said at the beginning of each presentation: Remember that when I have the hat on I am talking seriously, when I take off my hat then I am joking. So, here is what we are going to do in this first part of the bible study. If I am covering my head, it is not me who is talking but the woman from the Bible. So, if I uncover my head it is just me. Hope it will work!

Let us listen the reading of Proverbs 31:10-31

My head is uncovered

This book of the Bible, the book of Proverbs is a collection of collections traditionally adjudicated to Solomon. The book is a sort of late evolution of the kind of literature in Israel tradition, since the last edition, according to the Scholars the one that we consider today as part of the Sacred Book, is the one that close the group of this specific literary style as we have it in the biblical canon. As you may know this kind of literature comes from authors that were considered "wise" in their societies and for that reason they play specific roles in the royalty courts as advisors and educators. Nevertheless, the book of Proverbs also includes elements of the so-called folkloric wisdom or what we called today, popular wisdom.

There are some other details about the Wisdom that make the difference between this type of literature and what is called prophetic literature of the Law. For the Wisdom tradition God is above all things a creator and in the process of creation, wisdom played a very important role. Not only God as being Wisdom to create as such but giving it to the world as an instrument for human beings to discern about the harmony of such a Creation. Wisdom is as well a tool for human beings to relate fairly with the

Creation. So, in the theological perspective of Wisdom we, as human beings don't need a special commitment with God in order to get to know the way in which God rules the world that belong to Him/Her. We don't even need that commitment in order to be sure about God's blessings. We just need to live a life with some common sense and taking responsibility with everything that God has created. If we do that, it will be enough for God to bless us.

The book of Proverbs also affirms something that is very important for us in terms of the kind of relationships we should develop as human beings with other humans. It focuses on family which means it focuses on communities, on the ethical values of the different roles played by each person within the family or in any other community that they could be part of. It is also true that the book also insists in the traditional roles of mothers and wives in relation with the generational continuity of the ethical foundations of the nation, in this case Israel. So, the role of multiplying values belongs, according to the tradition, to the women.

One of the most interesting things about this book is that it embodies Wisdom as a woman so this Wisdom/Woman represents a sort of synopsis of all the positive roles played by women in the society. Even more interesting is the way that Wisdom gives value to personal experiences as starting point for the theological reflection in order to build social paradigms. Coming from the Latin American/Caribbean context this is pretty much what the Feminist Liberation Theologies affirms. The daily life, the way in which we struggle daily with the challenges of trying to affirm the abundant life Christ promised in the midst of the chaos, is definitely the place in which we start building our faithful responses to God's call in order to transform the world. So, all the emphasis of these traditions about Wisdom from a feminine (not feminist but feminine) perspective and the value of the daily life within it, give us a very interesting alternative among the many values of a book like Proverbs that is worthy to rediscover in our context. The text we read belonged to the closing chapter of the book in which it is confirmed a feminine image of Wisdom... in this case represented by a precise description of a virtuous woman...

Covering my head

Shalom! Peace be with you! Good morning! Such a beautiful group of women!! I am so excited to be here!! I wish you can picture yourselves from here... Let me introduce myself: My name is Wisdom. At least that is the name I chose because of what I represent. I have been hidden in the Bible for centuries and centuries, believe it or not mainly because I am a woman.



Once in a while I show up whenever someone wants to affirm things about what kind of behavior women or wives should have. In my experience, it is mostly when churches or women groups celebrate Mother's Day or even on Wedding Anniversaries... those types of celebrations pull me out of the Bible most of the time just because they want to listen to beautiful and nice words. They don't pay much attention to who I really am.

I belong to an acrostic, which means all the verses starts with one letter of the "alefato"... the Hebrew alphabet, so it follows the order of the letters. Let me tell you something, here in confidence: in my language, woman and wife are the same word. As if we were not real until we marry... but don't let me go that way this morning. I want to tell you part of my story or even better "our story" because I also belong to you: I am all of you... well, sort of. Every time a woman or a group of women open a Bible, I listen, I pay attention; I try to connect with her or with them. Like what I am doing

now. Most of the time I try to raise my voice to let her or them know I am Wisdom, We Are Wisdom, Women are Wisdom! For some strange reason it does not always work...

Uncovering my head

Many versions of the Bible, title this part of the book as “A women/a wife that fears the Lord” or versions of that same title. Can you read it out loud what your Bible says? The truth is the acrostic is about the meaning of a “woman of value”. The interesting thing about it is that the term “value” is mostly used to talk about men because it means someone that has been able to develop all their abilities and powers. What I am saying is that this text is a sort of poetic approach to Wisdom using the metaphor of a woman who has been able to develop their abilities and powers in all their strengths. So, Wisdom in the text is the feminine nature of God in its greatest expression.

I am not going to talk much more about details but those of you who know me well, understand I am bringing this text to you not to talk about how nice and well behaved you should be in your life or in your church... maybe, just the opposite.

Covering my head

I have been around since the very first day. As I told you before, once you opened your Bible and looked at it discerning the Word of God, I came to life. I have been listening, I paid attention, I connected with all of you... didn't you feel my presence among you? Wisdom moved around since the very moment you came together looking to support each other and worked in a community in order to bring back to the Creation of God, a bit of common sense using life-transforming experiences as instruments to transform the world into a better version of God's kingdom. Didn't you already realize how good you are together and how much power for transformation is moving within you and among you?

We are part of the family of God. We are tied by God's love and we cannot break those links, it is not possible. Even, if we sometimes don't like each other. In my poem the image is about how to live up a household, a common space that expands itself beyond any border, even beyond our churches. It is about the OIKOS, the house of God, the whole Creation. No limits, my dear sisters... no limits! We are a huge, diverse, beautifully created as good... no, no, not good but very good. Wherever you are, wherever there is a living creature, the household of God is manifested. So, don't stock yourselves in the nuclear family: Mum, Dad, children or so... It goes beyond, even out of your comfort zones, because God's Creation is immense!

I am asking you to help me in looking at my poem thinking not about your nuclear families, or even your church. Read it again and again and again... think about the household of God. Try my sisters because that is our gifts as women: we are wise! We are wisdom!

What my poem talks about is about relationships. Yes, relationships... relationships based on trust, relationships we create in order to do good, to work hard, to provide for each member of the family. Each member of the family, the huge family of God, deserves attention and dignity. That is why my poem talks about strengths and strengthening our arms to work. My poem talks about hands that are always busy and it talks about stretching out our hands to the poor. It also talks about autonomy, and sustainability; about dignity and joyful trust in the future. It insists on Wisdom and Kindness, in paying attention to everything that happens in the household and it is very tough with laziness.

Nevertheless, let me be as honest as I can be. I trust you enough to be honest. The reason I am called a woman of value is not because I am perfect or well behaved, or a good mother or even a good wife. It is

only because I persisted in searching and developing my gifts, the gifts that God gave me as a human being. I searched them, I identified them and I worked hard to make them useful to my family. Again, I am not talking only about my closer relatives... I am talking about the wider fellowship of all living creatures I relate with in my life. I worked hard; I constantly worked to make all those gifts meaningful. I worked with my hands, I used my intelligence, I paid attention to those around me in need and I was in solidarity with them. It was not about feeling good about myself, it was about creating meaningful and right relationships with those around me. That is what this is all about, right relationships that create ties as families' do, links that transcend and reach further enough to make a difference wherever you are. I hope you understand what I am talking about.

Uncovering my head

Sisters, I am a sort of outsider in this family of the World Day of Prayer. I have always been engaged in every celebration, while I was in Cuba and all these years in Europe, even so I come here as an outsider. Let us think about this WDP movement as a family. It is a huge, beautiful, and diverse family. According to this text a family that pays attention to all kind of details related with the daily life is capable of building healthy relationships in all senses. It is a family that enables itself to bear fruits...

If you look at yourself through this story you may be able to see what I see here: an amazing group of talented women, many gifts, some of them maybe not discovered yet. There is an immense potentiality in a movement like this one. Look at yourselves! Women from all over the world, from all denominations, a beautiful rainbow of colors, ages, and backgrounds...

Uncountable gifts all together in a worldwide family that empowers each of you at the same time, which empowers such a community of women. The text reminds us that all these gifts, in order to be developed, constancy, effort, hard work and intelligence are needed. There are also two main conditions for those gifts to be meaningful. First is to be aware of what happens around us, the needs we identify surrounding us. Those talents cannot neutralize your sense of solidarity. Secondly, if you are not using those abilities developed for the good of others, for the sake of the whole family, it will not make any impact beyond your own egos.

You, dear sisters, can go beyond your own comfort zones in order to make the world a better place. You have the opportunity, and I would say the responsibility, as women of faith, to make an impact in your own contexts and globally that will help in bringing justice to the Oikos, to the household of God, to God's Creation.

Covering my head

Before I go back I want to share one more thing with you all. It is about my favorite verse in my poem. It describes me, women of value, as the one that is dressed with strength and dignity and shall rejoice in time to come... something like that. I love that way to describe me, which also describes all of you. I mean, it must be so if we are Wisdom.

As well as in my times, you are facing challenges that are life threatening. Nevertheless, I know that life as a whole is in jeopardy these days. As never before, humankind is facing a critical moment that needs urgent actions if you want to save yourselves and the generations to come. Times like the ones you are living in, need strength and dignity to be faced, and you, you and me, we are dressed with them. We the wisdom, we the woman are dressed with strength and dignity. Although my poem does not explain much (as all poems) the truth is that they come as a result of an option, the decision to be strong, to be full of

energy, to work hard to discover the gifts each of us may have and the ones we can have when we stand together, trusting we are the wisdom, we contain the wisdom of God.

Not that I want to scare you but you are here for a reason. God brought you here intentionally. God gathered you here to give you an opportunity to affirm yourself as wise, powerful, strong, compassionate, dignified women and God reminds you that you are equipped with strength and dignity and those vestments are the ones that give you the joy to look into the future with confidence. That sense of trust that God is with you, accompanying you and leading you with the power of the Spirit, joyfully into the future. That is what my poem is about. I can promise you that if you allow me I will also walk with you because I am Wisdom... you are, we all together are.

I have to go now. It has been a blessing to talk to you this morning. Hope you remember I am always here, listening, paying attention, connected with all of you. I am Wisdom, you are, and we all together are.

Peace of God be with you...

Uncovering my head

So, what we are going to do now. Let us gather into small groups.
Here are questions I want you to talk about...

Read the text again, thinking about the house of this woman as the household of God and of we, women, working in that household trying to make it a better place. What new things come out of the text reading it that way?

What about reading the text, substituting WDP as the house and the family, and reflect on the things you can do together to make a difference in your churches and in your own contexts?

How can you use your wisdom as women to transform the world, living your daily life faithful to the mandate to take care of God's household and helping others to join the task?

Afterward, let's share what the groups discussed and finish by singing *Ven a la Rueda* (#8 Program Book)



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economic and social justice.

Bible Study Luke 14:1-24
Come - Everything is Ready and There is Still Room!

Ulrike Bechmann



The women of Slovenia will be at the center of World Day of Prayer 2019 and they offer the service under the title: Come - Everything is Ready! The theme is a quote from the parable of the Great Banquet in Luke 14:17. The banquet is ready and the master of the banquet invites his guests: "Come; for everything is ready now." His slave later expands and enlarges this invitation: "There is still room" (Lk 14:22).

The following study includes the analysis of the biblical text and offers suggestions on how to present this Bible study. It is what I presented at the International Meeting of the World Day of Prayer International Committee in Brazil in 2017. It is given to you as an example of a Bible Study that you could conduct in preparation for the World Day of Prayer 2019. Some practical steps and tools for the presentation are also included. At the end a *chart* outlines the composition of Lk 14:1-24 in order to make the interpretation visible.

(Within the study, the remarks in italics and brackets are proposals for the presentation).

Outline of the Bible Study:

1. Careful reading: Stumbling blocks in Luke 14

2. Context and Theology of the Gospel of Luke

- 2.1. Luke as Narrator, or: What does the text say and why?
- 2.2. Luke's Theology of Justice for the Poor
- 2.3. Luke's Theology of Meals

3. The Structure of Luke 14:1-24

- 3.1. First scene: The Healing of a Dropsy (v.1-6):
- 3.2. Second scene: Words of Wisdom on Behavior at Banquets (V.7-14) (V.7-14)
- 3.3. Third scene: The parable of the Great Banquet v.15-24

4. Interpretation of the Parable v.15-24

- 4.1. The Frame of the Parable: A Beatitude Pronounced by a Guest (v.15)
- 4.2. The Parable of the Great Banquet: A story within a story (v.16-23)
Interpretation verse by verse
- 4.3. The Frame of the Parable: A Woe at the End (v.24)

5. Luke 14:16-23: A parable for Luke's community

6. Selected Literature

1. Careful reading: Stumbling blocks in Luke 14

This Bible study searches for an empowering message in the gospel. To do this requires a close contextual analysis of the literary structure of the story in the gospel of Luke. Unfortunately, in church history the interpretation of Luke 14 was far from being empowering. On the contrary: this story often was misused for moralizing messages that downgraded the public, and also for forcing people into confessions and conversions to Christianity, often enough violently. Luke 14, especially Luke 14:15-24 has many stumbling blocks and its interpretation needs caution.

(Visual Signal for Caution): To underline the necessary caution that is needed before any interpretation put up a signal to the audience. Example: A large red exclamation mark.)

“Compelle intrare” (Latin: Force them to come in)

The first problem is the interpretation of v.23. In Luke 14:23 the master's invitation for the poor is: Compel them to come in. The Greek word *“anankason eiselthein”* can be understood in this way. Church Father Augustin (354-430 A.D.) interpreted this as a calling to fight against those who didn't join the Church. This interpretation was taken up in a horrid way throughout the history of various churches. So, if there were military or other forceful measures available for churches they used Luke 14:23 as a justification to violently force people into Christianity. Violence was directed against people considered as heretics or heathens. Be it the Donatism in the time of Augustin, the “heretics” in the Middle Ages in Europe or the indigenous people in Latin America during the 16th century and later – the violence against them was religiously legitimated by the gospel. Therefore caution in interpretation is needed!

Luke 14:16-23 is a parable

The story of the Great Banquet (Lk 14:16-23) is told as a parable (v.7). Beware not to make quick and simplifying identifications; you do not want to miss the main point of the parable. Unfortunately, reading many interpretations one has to admit that often this quick identification is the case.

- Too quick of an identification holds that the master in the story is Jesus or God and “we” are the ones who refuse to come because we have excuses - and thus we will miss the kingdom of God. We are portrayed as an ungrateful lot!
- Or alternatively: The master (God/Jesus) invites all and if we do not come on our own, we will miss the kingdom of God. The same result!

In the end people are sinners and they are put down instead of being empowered. But is this the aim of the parable?

A parable sets up a comparison, but does not compare in a simple way: “This is...” Often a parable begins by saying something like “this is like...” In the story of the Great Banquet just a sigh of a guest, beatitude to those who are eating bread in the kingdom of heaven, indicates that comparison. It is clear that Jesus picks up that hint on the kingdom of heaven in the following story. It is a parable, even if the character as *parable* is now placed in v.7. “Parable” indicates that the story that follows has a second meaning in addition to the apparent meaning of the story. For sure one has to avoid a direct identification. The danger here is to identify the master of the house directly with God (*see below*). But the challenge is: What in this story is *like* the invitation to the Great Banquet. Caution: do not ask, “Who is God or Jesus?” or “Is the Banquet heaven?” Being open minded to this difference is important!

Why are the parables in the gospels so intriguing? They seem to be simple stories that everybody can understand. Mark Twain's quote, “It ain't those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand”, hits the nail on the head

The parables are stories that do not give an answer to questions or problems. They are told in a way that draws the readers into the story. And when there are open endings, the reader is especially asked: What do you think? What do you make out of this story? Parables want to provoke, to initiate thinking! Very often, it is an open process provoking the reader to search out for a deeper understanding. This understanding depends on the standpoint of the reader, the culture, the identification with figures in the story, one's own value system – there is more than one answer and more possible interpretations than only one. It is at the core of Christian communities to discuss the parables and interpret them in

their context. Living according to them is and was always the challenge and it is a different meaning depending on who is reading them. Any of the gospels have a special theology that aims at the community for which the gospel is written.

2. Context and Theology of the Gospel of Luke

(Visual Signal for Narrator: To visualize the narrative structure a “narrator” is asked to take a special chair, he/she is addressed when the special literary quality of the phrases and the gospel are named. Explaining the special literary form of the text it is possible to hold up a sign with N for “narrator.”)

2.1 Luke as Narrator, or: What does the text say and why?

Reading a gospel one first “meets” one important “person” that one does not know or even sees: that person is the narrator. The early Christian tradition has named them as Luke, Matthew, Mark, John. Each gospel has its own specific background and focus. Therefore, one speaks of the theology of Luke that is different from the theology of the other gospels.

No matter whom this voice is, in reality we are dealing with the text-voice that narrates. This text-voice directs the seeing and the feelings, the empathy, sympathy or enmity to the persons that are presented. The narrator decides what is important, what kind of scenery enfolds, the narrator holds the inner eye. Sometimes the narrator misleads readers and hearers in order to present a totally new and astonishing turn to what might be expected. What is told and what is not told matters in the same way. What is told is important for the narrator, but also what is not told. These empty spaces may be important for the interpretation if they are there on purpose – to stimulate the imagination, the theology and to invite the reader to take a stand on the text, to claim their opinion, their point of view.

Not every text is told for us to follow it exactly; sometimes it is told to provoke a different understanding. The narrator asks his readers on which side they are standing and to decide what action this requires from them!

Just a few words on Luke: He writes for a community that seemingly has rich people as well as poor people. Any text has to be interpreted within its context and so we need some background about the gospel of Luke. Each story is carefully placed within the gospel. Some information about its special theology and message are necessary for a deeper understanding of the story. The following theological topics are important as background for the story of the Great Banquet.

2.2. Luke’s Theology of Justice for the Poor

Luke has a strong theology of justice for the poor. From the beginning of the gospel, the kingdom of God means uplifting the poor. In Luke, poverty is not spiritualized. The poor are the real poor; the hunger is real, and justice is needed to lift up the lowly.

Luke made clear at the very beginning of his gospel that the kingdom of God and the coming of the Messiah Jesus would turn the world and its structure and values upside down. Mary’s song of praise in Luke 1:

*And Mary said,
“My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,*

and holy is his name.
 His mercy is for those who fear him
 from generation to generation.
 He has shown strength with his arm;
 he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
 and lifted up the lowly;
**he has filled the hungry with good things,
 and sent the rich away empty.**" (Lk 1:46-53)

This introduction at the beginning of the gospel proclaims a justice that turns the unjust world upside down. Justice has to do with a just distribution of power and money in order to gain balance again. It is a revolutionary justice. The theology of justice requires talking about money and distribution of wealth. Luke is not spiritualizing poverty: The poor are the real poor; the hungry are those who really have hunger. For Luke, big money or money based on injustice ("mammon") stands in contrast to God. Sharing is necessary and unavoidable in order to gain justice. Sharing is a sign of the kingdom of God and the rich have to share. Only through sharing do they have a chance to gain the kingdom of God (Lk 16:19-31; 6:20-26). Money and wealth are meant to serve (Lk 16:9).

2.3. Luke's Theology of Meals

Meals are structuring the gospel of Luke. Luke sends the readers of the gospel together with Jesus from meal to meal. Jesus eats with different people: Pharisees, sinners, poor, rich, tax collectors and his friends. The focus lies in eating together and having bread and wine for all – and eating together in a new community. At the meals Jesus develops his theology of a new community. Luke's gospel reflects the situation in the early Christians communities. People of different social strata's, bound through their belief in Jesus as the Messiah, are eating together. But how do slaves and rich persons eat together, which is contrary to the social relations in society? Luke narrates how Jesus behaves and teaches at meals. He has no problems to eat with diverse persons that are normally not together at a table.

Paul scolds the young Christian community of the Corinthians (1 Cor 11) and orders that they have to eat together. Furthermore the rich persons have to share their meals. The new community was difficult to maintain.

3. The Structure of Luke 14

(Red sign): Caution with interpretation; don't take sentences out of their context!

In studying a biblical text, it is important to rely on the context of the text. It is not by chance how an episode is structured. Therefore, a short glance at the position of chapter 14 within the gospel is interesting. Luke (the narrator) puts the Great Banquet in the center of the gospel. The meal is the exact center of the various Lukan meals (Lk 7:36-50; 9:10-17; 11:37-54; 12:37; 14,1-24; 16:19-22; 17:7-10; 22:16ff.; 24:30ff.). Therefore, one can expect to find a central message there. The story of the great banquet is part of the whole chapter Luke 14 and is connected to the whole chapter. This placement within the whole chapter is important, because three parts of the chapter are dealing with the question how to behave at a feast and what Jesus is doing and saying about it.

Structure of Luke 14:

The chapter Luke 14 has three scenes; all three are held together while they tell what happened at the meal at the house of the Pharisee. Jesus goes there and from then on, he is the master of the symposium, acting, teaching, and telling a parable. The three scenes are within the same *symposium*

and the same room. If you were to dramatize Luke 14 in a theater no changing of the stage would be necessary – but one would have to illustrate that V.16-23 is a story within a story. A play might “freeze” the banquet and then set within the scene the narration of the Great Banquet – now with Jesus as the narrator. The Great Banquet (Lk 14:16-23) is the third part of a threefold composition about banquets and behavior at banquets. It is framed by beatitude (v.15) and woe (v.24). The whole chapter is important for the interpretation of the Great Banquet.

1	Setting the scene: Meal at a Pharisee’s house
2-6	Jesus teaching and healing of a dropsy
7-10	Jesus’ wisdom word: How to behave as a guest
11-14	Jesus’ wisdom word: How to behave as guest and as host
15	Guest: Beatitude (framing and triggering the parable)
16-23	Parable of the Great Banquet
24	Jesus: Woe (framing and ending the parable)

Many cross-references indicate that these three parts are put together with caution.

- They have a common theme: What is a meal or banquet? Whom to invite? How to behave?
- 12 times the chapter uses the word “invite”
- 7 times the chapter uses the word “dine”
- “Eating bread” connects v.1 with v.15

It would be interesting to go deeper into each of the three scenes, but due to the necessary concentration on the parable, I note only a few aspects.

3.1. First scene: The Healing of a Dropsy (v.1-6):

Luke 14:1 sets up the first meal in the house a leading person of the Pharisees on Shabbat. Jesus visits the house in order to “eat bread.” The host and the guests are watching closely what Jesus does or says. Jesus eats with different kinds of people, here are the Pharisees. “Eating bread” is used as a symbol for any meal. Bread was the basic food, and hunger was a threat to the poor. In the whole scene, the Pharisees are silent: They only watch Jesus, they do not approve his citing the Jewish law and questioning the behavior on Shabbat; they do not comment on his healing the dropsy. Silence – no answer or action whatsoever. We find silent Pharisees and guests and a talkative Jesus.

At a *symposium*, a meal with guests in the Greek tradition, the host and the guests had different roles. One of the guests had a leading role in talking. Here Jesus is the one who talks. We are told explicitly that the others are “silent” and do not know what to say. Jesus alone is talking during this meal. And having healed the man with dropsy he teaches about how to understand Shabbat and its Halacha¹, and having given wisdom sayings, he responds to the beatitude of an anonymous guest by telling a parable about the kingdom of God.

What is Shabbat? Shabbat has all the characteristics of a feast – it is different from the “normal day’s routine” and it is *the* feast that unites and binds the community together even up to today, even before the destruction of Jerusalem’s temple in the year 70 AD. Like any feasts, Shabbat is the central significant markers of the Jewish community. At Shabbat Jews celebrate and remind themselves ritually

¹ “Halacha” is the “way” a Jew is directed to behave in every aspect of life, encompassing civil, criminal and religious law.

of the great deeds of God. The absence of any work and the feast with eating, drinking, family, study of God's word also celebrate God's creation. Resting from any work repeats the resting of God's rest at the creation. "So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation. (Gen 2:3)". The ritual of Shabbat reminds us of the exodus, Israel's liberation from Egypt. Symbols and prayers, drinking and eating at Shabbat recall the liberation from Egypt through God accompanying them. Liberation is the central theme. Jesus refers to this meaning when he justifies his healing on a Shabbat.

Who were the Pharisees? The Pharisees are often seen as the main adversaries of Jesus. They were one of the religious Jewish groups and focused on the interpretation of the Torah in daily life under Roman occupation. What is life according to the Torah under problematic political circumstances, as the Romans had occupied Judea? The Pharisees are at the core of the rabbinic movement after the fall of the temple and Jerusalem 70 A.D. Jesus and the Pharisees are discussing the same question: What is according to the Torah and for Jesus what is the kingdom of God? The kingdom in the Greek language is the *basileia tou theou*. In Luke 11:20 Jesus sees in his healings the beginning of the kingdom of God.

Jesus heals a dropsy: A sick man appears at the meal on the Shabbat. What "dropsy" really means is not quite clear. In old texts, it is seen as a dangerous disease. The narrator is not interested in the man but in Jesus and his deed. Jesus starts to discuss the question with his host: Is it allowed to heal on a Shabbat? The main question behind this: Is this a forbidden "work" on Shabbat or is healing something that fulfills what Shabbat is all about: celebrating the healing and liberating deeds of God. Jesus gets no answer, heals the man, and sends him away. The silent Pharisees stay silent even at the second question of Jesus: Is this not according to the Torah?

The narrator sets a spotlight on the discussion about healing on Shabbat. Jesus understands healing as the deep meaning of the Shabbat and Jesus fulfills that meaning in healing this man. In this way, the meal reveals that the kingdom of God is present in the healing – even if it seems to be a violation of the Shabbat. Luke here gives an example for the meals of the early Christians. Their practice of meals should reveal the kingdom of God.

3.2. Second scene: Words of Wisdom on Behavior at Banquets (V.7-14)

The main theme of the second scene is a meal or a feast and the behavior of host and guests. The two wisdom sayings build the second part of the chapter 14. Jesus is teaching with twofold sayings. The first is about the behavior as a guest; the second is about whom to invite to a banquet.

In v.7-11 Jesus reacts to the situation: The behavior of the guests at the meal in the Pharisee's house triggers the sayings. V.7 introduces them as "parable." But the way in which they are told are wisdom-sayings, not a parable. Maybe they were inserted later and v.7 was originally the introduction into the parable of v.16. But however, v.7 connects the third part with the second.

a) v.7-11: The best behavior as a guest: Don't seek the best places but choose the last ones

b) v.8-14: The best behavior as a host: Invite the lame, the blind, the crippled, and the poor.

This second saying challenges the system of reciprocity and is taken up by the parable later. Reciprocity means: If someone invites you, they expect to get an invitation from you. This was common practice for rich people and a system of networking. In such a system it is not possible for the poor and all the people on the margins to be included. "The poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind" links the verse to the parable, where "the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind" are indeed invited. The parable tells a story and challenges the societal structures.



3.3. Third scene: The parable of the Great Banquet v.15-24
Eating bread binds V.1 to V.15 together. The guest's beatitude praises those who "eat bread" in the kingdom of God. The third scene tells a story in the story. V.15 and v.24 frame the parable that is v.16-23. In v.15 someone responds by describing those are blessed who eat bread in the kingdom of God – thus telling the story about a great banquet. In v.24 Jesus utters a woe to the rich people.

4. Interpretation of the Parable v.15-24

4.1. The Frame of the Parable: A Beatitude Pronounced by a Guest (v.15) (*Bringing persons on a "stage" helps to illustrate the structure of the text. The persons must not speak on their own, just representing the persons. Jesus, a Pharisee, and a "guest" sit together. A cloth or other materials separate the parable as story in the story from the group of the symposium. And again, the two scenes are indicated. The master and the slave start at the first part, after the music (V.21) both change to the second part. There other persons can be brought to the stage and fill the room.*)

Sketch of the scenes:

Jesus and the Pharisees v.1-15	master + slave v.16-21b	master + slave + guests (filling up) v.21c-23	Jesus and the Pharisees v.24
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Lk 14:15: One of the dinner guests, on hearing this, said to him, "Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!"

V.15 has various functions:

- It binds the story back to the invitation to the house of a Pharisee in v.1. They all are eating bread and one of the guests starts to talk.
- It explains the association to bread: Bread is the connection - how would it be to eat bread in the kingdom of God?
- It is the transition from the end of the wisdom sayings about guests and host into the parable
- The beatitude (v.15) and the woe frame the parable (v.24).
- It refers to the Kingdom of God as a theme of the parable.

As an answer to this guest' beatitude – it is not important who the guest is – Jesus tells a parable about the kingdom of God. The times are hard. Different political movements try to cope with the Roman occupation through violence, terror, or obedience or negotiating. They all are longing for liberation from the Roman oppression and hoping for the kingdom of God, God's salvation, God's Shalom, peace. Jesus tells stories that shed a different and unexpected light on a situation. What that means for the kingdom of God, (the *basileia thou theou* in Greek,) the hearers then – and we, the readers, - will all have to find out.

By a parable, Jesus is not defining the kingdom of God directly. Very often interpretations start with V.16. However, for the gospel the framework is important. It has an impact on hearing the story.

Parables have an open end, they try to make us think, and they try to draw us into the story and be part of it – and ask us to make something out of it. And this message is not the same for everybody. Who reads and hears the parable comes from a certain context. The individual interaction between parable and reader provides an outcome that is different for each one.

4.2. The Parable of the Great Banquet: A story within a story (v.16-23)

v. 16: Then Jesus said to him, "Someone gave a great dinner and invited many.

Jesus' parable is a story within a story. The very first sentence of the story of any text is very meaningful. Here also we have an artfully arranged sentence. *How* things are presented is important for the interpretation.

Think of a stage: Curtain – and the stage is visible. What and who is visible?

Here is **someone**. Someone: Any other determination is missing.

Who is the host? It is not important. Important is the type of person and his invitation.

The same applies for the invited persons. Many! The "many" are not distinguished.

What is the reason for the invitation? No reason given.

The indetermination provides the opportunity for open identification.

Presenting the acting persons without anything special indicates that the persons as individuals are not the focus of the story. However, as little as the text says, some information is there and it is about their milieu.

Who is "someone", who is able to invite many? It must be a well-to-do person. To provide enough room for many people lying on couches at a banquet requires a big house. Inviting many implies enough room and enough food and drink. Maybe he was invited by the "many" before and has now to invite them back. The hearers of the story are not totally in the dark of who Jesus means when he says "someone." The "someone" stands for all who are able to give a banquet and celebrate a feast. A poor man or a poor family cannot raise enough money for such an event. So there should be some wealth; there must be enough money. A small sentence, but it implies a lot for the hearers: The host and the guests are rich persons.

Up to now one expects a nice story. A big meal – what a joy. Most of the people had a shortage of everything. To be hungry was normal for many people at that time. Many lived in villages or in towns in poor circumstances. Even if there was no hunger – the possibility of poverty was omnipresent. How easily it could be that there was not enough rain for the crops and then the harvest would be in danger. Or the Romans could take the food away or raise the taxes. If one was ill, there was no income. The daily workers in towns lived from hand to mouth and it was not sure that the family got enough food. In short, many people lived in precarious conditions.

A story about a feast raised expectations. A banquet, a feast implies more than just enough eating and drinking. It was (and is) a symbol for joy, for community, and in religious terms it is a sign for the kingdom of God. The beatitude of the guest about the blessed who eat bread in the kingdom of God opens up to a second level of understanding. The abundance of a feast is the taste of the kingdom of God. In Isaiah says:

*Is. 25, 6-8: (6) On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-matured wines,
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-matured wines strained clear.*

*(7) And he will destroy on this mountain
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,
the sheet that is spread over all nations;*

(8) he will swallow up death forever.

*Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces,
and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth,
for the Lord has spoken.*

(9) It will be said on that day,

Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.

This is the Lord for whom we have waited;

let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

(10) For the hand of the Lord will rest on this mountain.

The story nourishes these positive expectations with the next verse.

*v.17: At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited,
"Come; for everything is ready now."*

The second sentence of the parable heads directly into action without any other information. It comes to the present time and sends his slave. The banquet is ready to start. Sending his slave confirms that this host is well off. He has slaves. The notion of a big rich house is strengthened. In addition, one expects that the guests belong to the same social class.

The slave

The slave is another figure in the story that is only described by his status. Like the other figures, only the types, the position, the function is of interest. What is his perspective on the feast? There was a lot to do for all who serve in the house of the host, workers and women, cooking, baking, bringing so much food for a big feast, providing the rooms and bringing the invitation to the guests. He is sent to the many guests and has one sentence to say: Come, everything is ready.

Come, everything is ready.

The slave has to repeat the invitation of the host. It is high time. The dinner is ready. Now –the guests are summoned to come. What an invitation! Come now, everything is ready! All you have to do is to go. No preparation, no work to do. One is invited to get food and wine in abundance, an opportunity to be saturated, to become full up. Eat and drink as much as you want. A gift for you!

The two first verses seem to introduce a nice story of a feast. If one looks closer, there is no direct communication. The story reports what the host had said, what the slave has to say, what the host had done. The host is not talking to the slave directly; he is not talking directly to the guests. The story sends us with the slave to the invited guests.

v.18a: But they all alike began to make excuses.

This is a blow. All the expectations melt away. This is the end of the idea of the banquet. Because **all** alike began to make excuses, not only the following three that are the paradigmatic for the whole bunch of persons. *Nobody* wants to join the feast!

A small sentence and everything is gone. The story could end here. Reading any commentary, the interpretations haste to the three following examples of excuses. However, they are only illustrations of what this small sentence says. Important is that *nobody* wants to join the feast! This is extraordinary and highly unlikely. Some excuses would be normal, but *nobody*? They all had accepted the first invitation. The banquet ended before it even started.

A parable exaggerates and tells something unexpected in order to get its point. The following three invited guests and their excuses are representing types of persons. Repetition is important in ancient literature. Literature was produced for ears; the hearers have to be reminded. Variation of a theme was desirable. It is part of the style of Luke to repeat things or tells incidents three times. Here, three times he cites an excuse, not only extending the story but in a skilled rhetorical way. Even if we have three cited speeches they are only reported speeches. No one speaks directly to someone else. But the speeches illustrate again the milieu. Although the excuses take more lines than the invitation, the focus stays on the one who wants to have a Great Banquet.

A short notice on preaching about the text: Very often preachers try to identify their actual hearer with the guests. Then moral exhortations about what we do or not do are abundant. But it is important to stay in the story and follow the flow of a parable. Again: A parable does not identify directly but offers a move to end the story with our own answer!

In v.18b-20 the repetitions of three excuses are composed very carefully.

*v.18b: The first said to him:
I have bought a piece of land,
and I must go out
and see it;
please accept my regrets.*

The first one is a long speech with a detailed reported. To buy – to go out – to see: three “actions” and then the formal excuse: “Please accept my regrets.” Here the parable is open for reactions. With whom do we feel?

- Do we feel with the host? The poor man, what a rejection! Isn't it bitter if you have everything ready for a feast and nobody shows up? Will this fact damage his reputation?
- Or with the guest, understanding his excuse? Sometimes there *is* work to do instead of time for celebrating!
- Or with the guest, knowing that there are meals and feasts where you do not like to go?

Before jumping too early to conclusions a look at the context is helpful. The background of the milieu was clear for the hearers of the parable. The invited person is very rich, maybe one of the tax collectors. Why? Because he is able to buy land.

Under Roman occupation, it was complicated for the ordinary peasants to keep their land. The taxes were high and the poor people in the countryside often were not able to pay them. The Romans did not collect the taxes themselves. They sold the taxes of a village, a small town or a part of the countryside to a rich person. This person paid and was now allowed to regain the money from the people. For him it was business to press and regain more than he had paid. Even living under the same oppression through

the Romans, the rich ones had ways and money to adjust. Some of them worked with the Romans, especially those who benefitted from the tax collection system.

For the poor people it was disastrous. If they couldn't pay they had to sell their land. Maybe the peasants could stay and work, but now as tenants and not owners. In addition, if again the harvest surplus was not enough for the taxes they had to surrender their children or themselves as slaves. In this context only a small class of people was able to buy land.

The gospels name these tax collectors as an enemy of the people and, from a Jewish point of view, as a sinner. Jesus often discusses with them and even eats with them (cf. Lk 19, Zachäus).

The first guest sets a pattern with his excuse and regret. The narrator takes two more examples, carefully working on the speeches.

*v.19: Another said,
"I have bought five yoke of oxen,
and I am going to try them out;
please accept my regrets."*

The narrator has set the pattern and now shortens the answer of the second guest: He uses only two lines as explanation and adds the regret. But his milieu has even more wealth.

Five yoke of oxen: What a huge investment! This must be a very rich person. Simple peasants were glad if they had some goats or some sheep. A cow or an ox was very expensive! Five yoke oxen exceed any "normal" investment. How much land does he have to need five yoke of oxen? The invited guest stands for a type of social class. Again, in the light of reciprocity the host also belongs to the upper class.

*v. 20: Another said,
"I have just been married,
and therefore I cannot come."*

The third guest only has two very short sentences and even a polite regret is missing! Just married, can't come! Our narrator makes it short; the hearers now have to get the principle.

This third excuse is widely discussed. Is it different from the others? Just married – who would not understand if he stays with his wife? Moneymaking or administration of the newly bought property and cattle occupies the first two persons. Having married is something personal. Well, not for the portrayed class! To marry a wife in the upper class mostly was an act of accumulating wealth. Family bonding was important, not personal feelings.

Remember: There were more excuses. The slave had to go to all invited guests, and all found a reason to reject the invitation. How short would their excuse be? The house is still empty, the meal and the wine are ready. The intention to have a full house for a feast failed.

*v. 21: So the slave returned
and reported this to his master.*

In v.21 the slave is the active person. He returns and he reports. Again not knowing how exactly the slave put the words; it is enough to know that he reported that all excused themselves. All have an important reason not to come. Land, cattle, marriage... are three reasons and there were more. The parable makes a halt! The story exceeded the situation in such a way that there is only the host and a huge empty house full of meal and wine, waiting for guests who will not come. The story comes to a dead end. What will happen?

Dead End! No feast, no celebration, no joy, only an empty house! And now?

- What will be the reaction of the inviting person?
- Accept the excuses and invite for another day?
- Give the food away to the poor?
- Invite other persons?

Important for the interpretation, is not to leave the parable but to stay in the story. The host is neither God nor Jesus who tells the parable. A parable does not compare directly but says "This is like..." What the "like" is has to be found out. The open end of the story challenges us to find an end for the story.

The dead end is the turning point of the parable (see chart)

(We want to experience the dead end and then the turnaround: music plays; the participants are moving in their place without going forward. After some time the participants turn around. The turn enables them to see something else, to get a new perspective.)

The verse is the turning point of the parable. The old order of the rich milieu ends. The dead end requires a new beginning. Otherwise there is no future and of course no kingdom of God! It needs a total conversion of everything and especially of everyone. If the host wants to celebrate a feast, he has to turn around and change. Therefore, the story is a story about the conversion of a rich man. Few words mark this change and the one can experience the change in how the narrator puts the text.

v. 22: Then the owner of the house became angry

Up to now one did understand that the host belongs to a high class in society and is a rich person with a big house, slaves, enough money to invite other rich persons. One of the changes is the first glimpse of the personality of the host. The feast is more important than any business. The excuses are not acceptable or sufficient for the host. He became angry! The narrator attests an emotion. The language represents this change with something else: The "someone" now is specified with his position as "owner of the house" – *oikodespotes* in Greek.

Many interpretations relate this "being angry" to the excuses. As a turning point, the "anger" relates not only to the past sequence but also primarily to consequence: There will be no feast. The house stays empty, no meal, no music, no drinking. However, his aim is to fill the house. If the feast is missing, the kingdom of God is not present. No taste of the *basileia tou theou*, no messianic hint for the new world.

...and said to his slave:

Again, an important change in contrast from the beginning. He addresses the slave *directly*. Up to now there was no direct speech to the slave, just the report of what he should do. Now the host sees the slave as a person – still as a slave, but he speaks to him. As we will hear the slave also gains his own voice. This verse describes the host now differently, as a person, not as a type representing the milieu, also with directly citing his words.

*"Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town
and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame."*

Go out – bring in! The two movements are important. It is not “summon”, as the others are summoned. There was no invitation before. The invitation for the feast into the house of a rich man will surprise all. Such an invitation blows up any convention of inviting guests or holding a banquet. It overtakes the rules for invitations, and it overrules the system of reciprocity.

...at once:

At once makes things urgent: There is no time because the banquet as a sign for the kingdom of God is near.

The people in Palestine were waiting for the Messiah, hoping for a new world and new order, the kingdom of God. Jesus proclaims that there are moments where it is already present (Luke 11:20/Mt 12:28). The urgency of the invitation wants not to waste time, let people taste the kingdom of God; bring glimpses of experiences like healings, uplifting the poor and a new community where the *basileia tou theou* is present. One of these signs is the new community eating bread together and celebrating together. The parable gives an example for the new community: Those at the margin of the society are part of the banquet. Paul's word in Gal 3.28 “there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ.” Indeed, Luke is aiming with his parable at the early Christian community for which he is writing. (*See below*)

The master of the house takes up the kind of guests that v.13 enumerated: the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. In Luke 14:13 Jesus taught the Pharisees whom to invite: *But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.*

One of the guests reacts: “Blessed is one who eats his bread in the kingdom of God.” It is a challenge to Jesus who may be right but the praxis is only possible in the kingdom of God. Jesus illustrated his word by a story how this kingdom of God can be achieved **now**. Very difficult and very easy, both! The feast constitutes the new community of the kingdom of God.

“... into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.”

Other than the first time the master of the house indicates a space where the new guests are living and where to go. The streets and lanes of the town are the places where the poor, the crippled persons, the blind and the lame persons stayed during the day. They have no chance of working and earning some money. Begging is the only possibility of surviving and helping the family a bit – if there is any family to whom they belong; the family was – and is in many countries up to now – the only institution of support for sick or old people. The parable takes up the Torah because the invited persons “the poor...” are found as a group of poor persons in the Old Testament. In relating to these persons in the house of the Pharisee, Jesus relates his word and his parable to the Jewish law.

...Bring them in:

I will come back to this phrase in v.23. But why: *Bring* them in? At first sight, one gets the impression that nobody wants to come to the feast, not even the poor people. Often interpreters think that the poor do not want to come.

But why are they not just invited? Why are they brought in? Looking at the persons who the slave has to bring to the feast the reason is clear: They really need help to come to the feast and to celebrate. It is not that they do not want to go or that they don't need the bread of the kingdom of God. It is not that they do not want to celebrate; nor is it that they do not want to satisfy their hunger and thirst, or to taste the wonderful world of the kingdom of God. They simply have no chance to get there on their own. The blind, the lame, the crippled persons are literally not able to get there. It is not only that they get no invitation from the rich person. They cannot come because of their handicap. How should someone with no eyesight find the house? How should someone who cannot walk, go to a house? How should someone crippled have the energy to come? And the poor? Even if they can walk on their own feet the poverty makes them crippled in a social sense. They are not part of the class that celebrates mutual invitations; they have no money to celebrate even with their own family and friends, they are not seen as persons of respect; they lack everything to be part of society.

Sending the slave with the order to bring them means sending a helping hand to bring them to the feast. It is a kind of empowerment for them to join the banquet – but not in a sense of bringing them to the level of the rich milieu. Otherwise, the terrible unjust system would be sustained. On the contrary, the kingdom of God promises a new world with a new order, no injustice, no oppression, and no poverty. Looking out for *the good* news it tells those who are at the margin of life that this has to change. The parable calls for the conversion of rich people! Indeed, rich people have to think anew about their wealth. Very often it is built at the expense of other people. This parable has a scary relation to present burning issues.

The message is: Your feasts are far from being a sign of the kingdom of God. If the table and house are not open for those in need, if the social system of reciprocity and connections of the same class and milieu does not end there is no real feast and no real joy and no liberation for the people.

(Hold up a "caution" sign)

Coming to this part of the parable it is important to *stay in the parable* and not to switch to allegory or identification with figures outside the story. A parable "*is like...*" not "*is.*" But interpreters often try to identify now suddenly the master of the house with God or Jesus. God invites the poor, Jesus invites the poor... this is true, but not here in the story. The master of the house is not God or Jesus, just the master of the house. Otherwise, the whole meaning of the parable has failed.

- a. It would be a terrible message if for God the poor and sick people would be only a replacement for the others who refuse to come. God's feast is without reciprocity! He will feed all people and wipe their tears away. A feast that earns this name should have some of the messianic feast of God. Therefore, one has to go to the end of the parable.
- b. One would miss the meaning that the parable has for the "masters" of houses. The story aims at the conversion of the master and therefore at the conversion of all who can identify with him – in different ways. The meaning of the parable depends on the interaction of text and reader. It is different and depends on who reads or hears it. It is not the same message to all people (see below).

*And the slave said,
"Sir (kyrie),
what you ordered has been done..."*



V.22 closes the first part of the invitation – what had been ordered has been done. The poor, blind, lame and crippled are in the house to participate in the banquet. The new world is present. The house owner now is addressed as *kyrie*. *Kyrios* (greek for master) is one of the messianic titles of Jesus; but also normally persons with high positions are called *kyrios*. The title can mislead the interpretation of the master as

Jesus. The house owner is not God or Jesus but a rich man who converted. Here we experience the change and reversion of the man. In addition, this conversion may be indicated by the different title. If this were the end, nothing would be missing in the parable – really nothing? What about the slave?

...and there is still room.'

In the next sentence the slave gets his own voice. After having said what was done he rises to be part of the planning of the banquet. He is active, thinking, proposing and bringing his own input and contribution that the feast might be a success. He says: There is still room. He is more involved than the host *oikodespotes*. He knows because he is working on the spot, concrete, directly with the people. The slave advances from being oppressed to a partner for the owner. He supposes, he urges, he proposes how to improve and extend the banquet. It is not enough what has been done until now. "There is still room" is not only a remark. It is an active working for the kingdom of God. There is still room: It is the slave who brings good news and enables the house owner to extend his invitation.

At least there are two good pieces of news: One from the master, one from the slave – and according to Paul there is no longer slave or master. Relating to the kingdom of God both are the same: Proclaiming the Great Banquet.

- a. *Come, everything is ready (master)*
- b. *There is still room (slave)*

v. 23: *Then the master said to the slave,
"Go out into the roads and lanes,
and compel people to come in,
so that my house may be filled.*

"Compel" was the word where in history the force against others to be Christians was justified (cf. *compelle intrare*, see above; *hold up the "caution" sign*). But like the first "bring them in" it is an extended invitation. The aim is clear: That the house may be filled.

In Luke's gospel the banquet does not start, there are still persons to come, to be invited. It is a never ending process, always knowing "There is still room." To hold the house open is the end of the story. Luke's aims at the message that **today the access to the coming feast is possible** – any day! Because there is still room.

If there is still room, more invitations are possible and the house is extended. House in Greek is *oikos* – and the *oikos* is extended, going from the town to the streets out of the town into the whole world.

4.3. The Frame of the Parable: A Woe at the End (v. 24)

v. 24: For I tell you, none of those who were invited will taste my dinner

With v.23 the parable ends and switches back to the banquet in the house of the Pharisee. Still Jesus is talking; now having ended the parable he says a woe to the guests in the house of the Pharisee. Why is Luke 14:1-24 ending with a woe? This woe relates back to the beatitude of v.15, and both are framing the parable. The beatitude opens the window to experience the necessary changes for the kingdom of God to come and draws the picture of the Great Banquet. The woe closes the window because Jesus is still at a banquet in the old order. Still the kingdom of God is not there.

But the parable had given the picture of the new community and the new values. The master of the house is there as an example how to come closer. And the invitation is there to identify with the people in the story and finish it in their own way. Like any other parable it depends who reads and hears it. The response is different and the message is different. For those wealthy people it is the message to follow the master and to convert to the kingdom of God. For those poor, lame, crippled and blind it is a story of hope and possibilities.

5. Luke 14:16-23: A parable for Luke's community

For Luke's community the parable is an appeal that the young Christian community has to be something different. It was a problem for the communities to break through the "normal" conventions. Celebrating the kingdom of God is nothing that fits with the normal order of a society. The Great Banquet follows the different order of the new world in God's reign. This new order happened when rich persons as well as slaves sat and ate together. Those who served the one were now present as equals. This was a huge challenge. In Cor 1.11 Paul's arguments that those who are not sharing at the same table are literally eating the last judgment. Many other references in the New Testament deal with this new situation. This difference was one of those that shaped Christianity in the long run as a belief on its own.

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The Parable of the Great Banquet or: The Conversion of a Rich Man (Lk 14:15-24)

The frame of the parable:

v.15: The Beatitude: It sheds a certain light on the story – parable is like, not: is the kingdom of God (relating it to Isaiah 25)

	CONVERSION of Master
1. Scene: v.16-21b Focus on Master	2. Scene: v.21c-23
No emotion	Emotion – anger
Milieu of a rich man	Milieu: Poor people
Reciprocity: Contrary to this principle, he does not give away anything and he receives nothing back	System: No reciprocity possible – only grace
No individual presentation	
No direct communication	Individuality of persons: the slave names the master (<i>oikodespotes</i> – <i>kyrios</i>)
They are called – invited guests, closed system of community	Direct communication between man and slave
Those who can come don't come	Bring them in: open system of community
"All" have excuses: Rejection of the man in his system	Support for those who can't come and can't give
No community in rich reciprocity	Slave works actively for the goal of a feast: Partner in filling the house
There is no feast without guests	New community of those who can't give anything
Aim: A Feast in a full house:	There is a feast because there are guests
No Feast is not possible in this world	Aim: A Feast in a full house:
	Feast is possible in this world
CONVERSION	

The frame of the parable:

v.24: The Woe: The story has an open end; how can the called (rich) people be part of the feast?

"Come, Everything is Ready"

"There is still room"

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From 1989 to 1999, she was the executive director and theological consultant of the German Committee of Women's World Day of Prayer. After that, she worked as Assistant Professor at the Institute for Biblical Theology at the University of Bayreuth, Germany. Since 2007, she is the Professor for Religious Studies and Head of Religious Sciences Department at Karl-Franzens-University of Graz, Austria. Her Post-doctoral thesis was in Biblical Theology and Religious Studies on the figure of Abraham in the interreligious dialogue at the University of Bayreuth, Germany. 2004

Environmental Context and Communities: Looking at the Brazilian Amazon

Sarah de Roure

Thank you for the invitation,

Before I start telling you what I have prepared, with my own words, I would like to tell you the stories of two women: Alessandra and Ivanilda. Both of them live in the Amazon, not far from each other, next to the Tapajós River, one of the most important rivers on the Brazilian Side of the Amazon.

Everything they need comes from the river, they use what nature offers, and Indigenous lands are being taken from them on behalf of the development. Indigenous lands are for the common good and to benefit every human being. They question what is actually needed to live and the threat of the dam upon the river, impacting the community and nature.

Who lives in the Amazon?

Community land is a controversial issue in the Brazilian Amazon as it is in Suriname, but who actually lives there?

The Amazon rainforest spreads across **nine countries**: Brazil, Suriname, Bolivia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Peru, Colombia, Guyana, and French Guiana. Some of these countries hold a bigger part of the Amazon forest than others. There are **6 cities** with more than 200,000 inhabitants.



About **20 million** Indigenous people from different cultural identities; Maroon and Quilombolas villages—both were communities made by runaway slaves, who fought against the big landowners and for the end of slavery, as they keep struggling today for their rights to the land and to their own culture.

The Amazon is home to more species of plants and animals than any other terrestrial ecosystem on the planet — perhaps 30% of the world's species are found there. Besides their intrinsic value as living organisms, these species have potential value to humans in the form of medicine, food, and other products.

The common house – Why the Amazon is so important?

The Amazon rainforest has long been recognized as a repository of ecological services not only for local communities, but also for the rest of the world. It is also the only rainforest that we have left in terms of size and diversity.

Rivers are the main vectors for transportation, while logging and collection of non-timber forest products are major industries in many cities, towns, and villages. Fish are a huge source of protein in the region; the floods replenish nutrients in floodplain areas used for agriculture.

Before 1970, only 1% of the Amazon was deforested. Between then and 2011, 18.2% of the forest (750,000km²) was destroyed – an area larger than France. The deforestation pace slowed down in the last decade but since 2015 it has picked up an upward trend, including the deforestation inside indigenous land.

The impact of Amazon deforestation continues to gradually undo the fragile ecological processes that have been refined over millions of years. Indiscriminate exploitation in this territory has caused innumerable impacts to its social, environmental and cultural patrimony.

The predatory economic practices such as mining, large-scale logging, livestock and soybean plantations contaminate soils and water; result in loss of biodiversity and expulsion of traditional populations. Another threat is the hydroelectric dams. There are more than 500 dams planned for the Amazon. The effect of these works, of which 140 are already built, already has disastrous impact on the ecosystem, including on the Amazon River.

When it comes to the global commitments to tackle Climate Change, despite the fact that Brazil has presented a bold goal for contributions to reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, there is widespread scepticism around the government's true capacity to fulfil them. Setbacks in land rights and environmental legislation: initiatives to loosen environmental legislation and guarantees for indigenous and quilombola communities, reinforce this scepticism.

It estimates that over 80 million Brazilians are in a situation of vulnerability to climate change and global warming could triple extreme famine in the Amazon until 2100. The impacts of climate change are even stronger for populations who live in extremely vulnerable socio-economic situations, such as the quilombolas – an estimated at 1.17 million live below the line of extreme poverty.

Among the main setbacks in the past year, reducing areas of conservation units, reform in environmental licensing and serious restrictions to indigenous people's access to their traditional lands. All the communities we mentioned, subsistence is guaranteed by the practice of agriculture, extraction of non-timber forest products and fishing. Changes in the frequency and severity of droughts and floods could pose challenges for their agriculture threatening food security and to their access to water and transport.

What faith Actions were taken to face that and build alternatives?

Alternative energy models and the peaceful resolution of economic and political conflicts in the Amazon region, threatened by mega infrastructure projects and predatory economic activity – with a clear impact for climate change. Last year, thanks to the struggle of communities organized in the Tapajós, the license for the installation of a hydroelectric plant in the Tapajos River was not granted, paralyzing on-going construction plans.

Indigenous people and Quilombolas practice conservation techniques are critical, as studies have shown that where collective land titles are held by indigenous or Quilombola communities, deforestation stands at about 1%, as opposed to 20% in the rest of the Amazon. These forest-dwelling people have a crucial role to play in the battle against climate change. That's why is so important to support the access to land rights and preventing deforestation is mitigating the impact of climate change on indigenous and other traditional people living there.

Good news: After 28 years of dispute two Quilombola communities in Oriximiná had their right to their land finally recognized with the support from Churches and Faith Based Organisations.

Global Ecumenical Advocacy for Climate Justice: at global level a coalition of CSOs campaign for Climate Justice and fair agreements for all countries.

What concrete actions could we take together?

- ✓ Support the communities by: praying; disseminating the information they want to share about the threats upon them and the environment; and raising support.
- ✓ Promote connections between different communities with common challenges, let's say two different communities in the Amazon (Brazil - Bolivia);
- ✓ Global Engagement – Engage communities outside the Amazon – to build mutual solidarity;
- ✓ Engage and strengthen the alliances between the Churches

Let me conclude with a word from Jesus (John 10:10)

“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

Ms. Sarah de Roure is the Country Manager for Christian Aid (CA) in Brazil working with local partners to tackle inequalities in the country. She has been a CA staff for the last 3 years but had worked in various social and political organisations for the past 10 years. A graduate of University of Brasilia, in History, Ms. Roure obtained her Master degree in international aid and development from Basque Country University in 2012. Currently living in São Paulo, she is personally engaged with different groups of popular Theology and Women's movement.

What is Climate Justice?
Workshop Focus on Theme – Description

Dora Arce-Valentin

The theme of the International Meeting is based on the next two years of WDP Celebrations: “All God’s Creation is Very Good!” (Suriname - 2018) and “Come – Everything is ready” (Slovenia - 2019).

The methodology is based on our motto “Informed prayer, Prayerful action.” Like the “spiral of justice” methodology of the 2012 New York WDPIC meeting, we will start by listening to envision our planning. The workshop should not be a lecture, but an interactive conversation that balances context, theological discernment, and call to action.

The first step is to be ‘Informed.’ We will speak from our own context and listen to each other. Where is wisdom of caring in our communities? Where is lack of caring? What are the roots of the crisis? “All God’s Creation is Very Good!” speaks of a hope and promise in the context of destruction.

The goal of the workshop is to create a community across geographical regions and diverse context to deepen the conversation about the environmental crisis we are living in, and the alternatives for sustainability. As we are informed, we want to move our awareness into prayerful action.

WDP approaches climate justice from the ethical principles for social justice of our faith traditions. Global warming affects us all, and there are some concrete steps that we can do at the personal level and community of faith to challenge that situation when we realize the intersections of environmental degradation and the racial, social, and economic inequities. The workshop offers an overview of the issue and lift up community responses for a life in its fullness.

Ancestral Wisdom: Land, Identity and Food Security

Workshop Focus on Theme – Report

Marilia Alves Schüller

Brief introduction of participants;

Introduction of the workshop theme:

What are Quilombos historically and their origins, including connections with of Trans-Atlantic Enslaved Trade? Who are Quilombola women? Where do they live? Etc.

Ethnic-racial identity is based on the sense of belonging to a racial or ethnic group, derived from a historical construction, based on social, cultural and political relations. Ethnic-racial identity is a term that seeks to make the intersection between a political attitude and the ancestral origin of the person. Caminhadas, sonhos e lutas: mulheres negras do Baixo Sul da Bahia.

Use of visual resources: Content posters & Photos

Understanding development from Quilombola women's point of view:

- ✓ With identity, respecting the culture and values of their communities;
- ✓ Taking into account public policies for rural women and Quilombolas;
- ✓ With the participation of women in decision making positions at community and city levels;
- ✓ With equity between women and men in the productive, commercialization and management processes;
- ✓ Taking into account the territorial rights of the remnant communities of Quilombo;
- ✓ Overcoming Violence against Women.

What are their life giving strategies and their relation to land and territory, identity and food security?

- ✓ Shared land/territory;
- ✓ Ties of solidarity;
- ✓ Identity linked to the collective;
- ✓ Parental ties unite community families with extended family;
- ✓ Social, cultural and religious practices mainly under women's responsibility since women are mainly the children caretakers and family functions organizers;
- ✓ Women have a leading role in the transmission of knowledge and community values;
- ✓ Resistance and wisdom learned from ancestors;
- ✓ Use of natural resources of the territory;
- ✓ Collective and agro ecological food gardening ties together food security and sustainable local development;
- ✓ Collective production and commercialization of food and handcrafts;
- ✓ Association and cooperatives.

Group work: Participants reflect in groups on parallels of that story with their own context; elements of wisdom and care in their own communities; where/what is the lacking for caring for Creation and how to promote change.

Plenary sharing

Maori people in New Zealand are connected to their land in similar ways to the Quilombolas. Land was taken from them by the English colonizers. Now New Zealand is paying compensation or giving the land back but that requires negotiations as the settlers had farmed the land for 8 generations.

In Samoa, we also have plantations, grades, sharing the community's food and tasks and caring responsibilities.

The Quilombolas are very different from us in Germany. We buy land as individuals and sometimes as extended families.

In Suriname, the Maroon people share the same story as the Quilombolas. They were brought as slaves into Suriname, and fled into the jungle forming settlements. They are still living in communities where they run community gardens.

There is a church in Egypt working with people who collect rubbish, to help them recycle and re-sale the products for their subsistence.

We are aware of our egocentrism and alienation of what is happening around us. So, one of the actions we can take is to make ourselves aware and support the communities. There are consequences when the rich nations or corporation grab lands to mine, pollute, or deforest. One the consequences are climate change, desertification, destruction of sustainable cultivation and migration.

In South Africa, our land was taken by white wealthy people but after 1994, the disadvantaged and poor were granted land by the government. For example, 200 hundred families were given 7 farms where they could grow crops and livestock but as they didn't have access to education as the white people had, they felt forced to sell the farms, and the families bought back their own small farms.

In Australia, the aboriginal people, who live in their own communities, and the refugees receive government assistance like land rights or access to a settlement but they face many problems.

We are grateful for the wisdom of the Quilombolas and for the people of the Amazon region, for our ancestors and family who have taught us about sharing in communities and connecting with the land, and for their deep knowledge of medicinal herbs and plants. We need to pass this wisdom to the future generations.

Marilia Alves Schüller (Brazil)

Marilia Schüller is a missionary with the Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church, serving in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in KOINONIA, an ecumenical organization, on the promotion of gender equality and relationships with churches, ecumenical and civil society networks, both in Brazil and internationally. Marilia's knowledge and experience on the struggles for people's rights encompasses inter-cultural, inter-ethnic, and inter-generational groups. She has a Bachelor of Theology degree at the Methodist School of Theology in São Bernardo do Campo, SP, Brazil. Specialization on Ecumenical Studies at Ecumenical Institute at Bossey of the WCC in Switzerland and a Master's degree in Social Sciences and Religion from the Ecumenical Institute of Post-Graduate Studies on Sciences of Religion in São Bernardo do Campo, SP, Brazil.



In God's Beautiful Garden Building Just and Inclusive Communities Workshop Focus on Theme – Report

Moumita Biswas, WDP India

Rationale: There are at least 20 million environmental refugees worldwide. The destruction and loss caused by environmental disasters affect multiple aspects of people's well-being, both physically and socially. Gender based violence increases after a disaster. It is not just sexual and physical violence, but verbal and emotional abuse, domestic violence, trafficking, child marriage, etc. Disaster-induced displacement and migration are likely to impact those left behind in terms of their roles, shifts in power structures, network support and opportunities. In order to restore the beautiful Garden of God our 'Oikos' and build inclusive communities of justice and peace its very essential for us to promote theology, spirituality of stewardship, accountability in our relationship with mother Earth.

Objectives of Workshop:

To facilitate participants sharing contextual stories about ecological devastation or disasters and how it increases different forms of gender based violence.

To share stories and strategies on how women and communities are healing brokenness and making efforts to make peace with nature.

To share how WDP as a prayer movement in action can restore God's Garden or Mother Earth and engage in advocacy to end gender based violence.

Methodology:

- Sharing stories
- Dialogue
- Group Creative activities and discussion

Group sharing:

Participants from Africa and Asia shared how dams are destroying nature, uprooting indigenous people who are migrating to different places, and how such a process is increasing human trafficking. In Bangladesh floods are quite common due to the releasing of water from dams and villages get drowned every year.

Participants from the Pacific and USA shared how climate change is destabilizing nature's forces by rising sea levels and strengthening storms and the residents of these places are forced to migrate and becoming climate refugees.

The drying of rivers and pollution of water has resulted in more violence against women. Women and girls in Asia and Africa have to walk longer distances to collect drinking water. This phenomenon has not only increased their work load but they face sexual violence and rape walking long distances.

Participants focused on how World Day of Prayer in 2018 is based on the theme "All God's Creation Is Very Good!" which can help women around the world engage in advocacy for 'Save Water, Our Rivers and Lakes and end Violence on Women and Girls Campaign.'

Participants from the Middle East shared the conflict between Israel and Palestine which is also aggravated by sharing water among the two countries and leading to further violence

Conclusion:

Participants agreed that 2018 WDP would further facilitate them to engage in advocacy to restore God's Creation, heal brokenness, and strive to end violence on women and nature.



Moumita Biswas (India)

Moumita Biswas is a South Asian feminist theologian from the Church of North India serving as the Executive Secretary of Women's Concern Ministry of the National Council of Churches (NCC). She also served as the Executive Secretary of Women and Gender Justice Department of Christian Conference in Asia. She is Child's and Women's Rights Activist. She is the WDP liaison and Steering Committee member of 'International Anglican Women's Network' of the Anglican Communion. She is passionately involved in promoting the 'Thursdays in Black Campaign' (A world free of Rape and Gender Based Violence), the 365 Days Zero Tolerance to Gender Based Violence: Make it Happen Now Campaign of NCC, and the Stop Human Trafficking and Sexual Slavery Campaign. She has been motivating women's fellowship to promote these Campaigns through WDP and FLC prayer movements.

Connecting Worship and Prayerful Action Workshop Focus on WDP – Description

Marilyn Pagan-Banks, WDP USA

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 the first Friday of March.

Within many different contexts, World Day of Prayer National/Regional Committees organize themselves in a way that engage their strengths, and their resources for collaboration and for building sustainable networks to enable changes in a suffering world.

In order for a Committee to bring a worship service from another part of the world to their local communities, the members embark on an annual journey rooted in faith and love. The annual preparation of this worship results on an ever growing and deepening understanding of the global and ecumenical community who affirms that prayer and action are inseparable to our witness.

The goal of this activity is strengthening our capacity as an organized movement to respond to the challenges of our time faithfully and creatively. Each workshop offers an opportunity to stretch beyond what is familiar (Guiding Principle 4), strive for wisdom (Guiding Principle 8) and to build a global ecumenical sisterhood (Guiding Principle 6) engaged in responsible action ((Guiding Principle 9).

WDP is a sisterhood of prayer and action. We are united in prayer around the world through the service written by women from a particular country. WDP encourages responsible action that grows out of the worship service. One consistent action has been the offering given to empower women and the communities for a better life. The workshop focuses on ways that the flow between prayer and action can be explored faithfully and creatively.

Rev. Dr. Marilyn Pagán-Banks is an ordained minister and pastor with the United Church of Christ and currently serves as the executive director of A Just Harvest, an anti-hunger organization committed to service, community organizing, and community and economic development located in Rogers Park. Rev. Pagán-Banks also teaches in the areas of faith-based community development and community organizing as an Adjunct Professor. She received her Masters of Divinity from McCormick Theological Seminary and her Doctorate in Ministry from the Chicago Theological Seminary where she was twice named Hispanic Scholar. Member of WDP USA.

Young Women Leading the Unity in Prayer and Actions Workshop Focus on WDP – Report

Lauren Wilks, WDP Canada

Our workshop focused on reaching young women with the World Day of Prayer movement. Keeping this in mind, we wanted to stress that World Day of Prayer should be an *intergenerational* movement: we wish to emphasize the inclusion of all demographics from childhood to senior citizens and everything in between.

Our panel was formed of seven young women, one each from Botswana, Canada, Cuba, Greece, India, Palestine, and Tonga. We intended to reframe World Day of Prayer and begin a discussion that would spark ideas and continue to be a topic of conversation beyond our international meeting in Brazil. To begin our session, we did something that no one expected: we moved our session outside. Not only was this literally a breath of fresh air, it also symbolized something more. It represented that if we want to get young people involved with WDP, we need to think outside the box, start doing things differently, and breathe fresh air into the movement.



Sona (Greece) opened with an icebreaker to help people feel more comfortable sharing our ideas. We split the group into two teams that sat in lines across from each other and raced to pass a lime from one end to the other, without touching the ground, using only our feet. While the group may have seemed skeptical at first, everyone was laughing by the end of the race and people seemed much more comfortable with each other. The women were split into three groups, each led by a pair of young women. Themes were: visual art, social media, and music. Lauren (Canada) facilitated the small groups and floated between each session, leading a group reflection and discussion at the end.

Visual Art

Ruth (Cuba) and Sona (Greece) led a small group that used art to create visual representations of what WDP meant to different group members. By seeing what WDP meant to different women from different countries and sharing their experiences, we emphasized the importance of creating and building relationships between women. WDP means something different to everyone, and creating a visual display was a way for us to bridge language, culture, and age barriers. Many women reported that colouring made them “feel like a little kid again” and that by colouring together, their discussion felt less formal and more personal as they were sharing the reflective experience together.

Social Media

Hung (India) and Tlamelo (Botswana) led a group discussion on using social media to reach young women. As many women are busy with work, school, church, families, and more, social media provides a way for women to connect quickly and engage when it is convenient for them. People can remain connected to the world during their morning commute on the bus or train, from the comfort of their own home while waiting for dinner to cook, or while waiting in a line for a cup of coffee. Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter all allow for different types of media sharing. Facebook provides a platform to share photos and stories through personal profiles or between groups of friends. Organizations can develop their own Facebook pages that people can follow and check for updates that share dates and times of events, links to articles or news updates and stories, or videos that may promote or summarize a future or past even respectively. Instagram is mostly used as a photo-sharing platform. Similar to Facebook, users set up their own profiles, follow other people and organizations

that share photos or short videos with short descriptions, and can comment on each other's posts. Snapchat is similar to Instagram in the sense that it is a photo and video sharing platform, but very different as the pictures and videos are shared and only visible for short periods of time. Users can send photos to each other that will disappear after 1 to 10 seconds (the sender predetermines the length of time), or post them to a story where they remain visible for 24 hours. Twitter allows for 140 characters to be shared per post. As is the case with the other social media platforms, users follow other users and can 'tweet' ideas between consumers. All of these provide different ways for women across the world to connect with each other and with different organizations to share ideas. This international connectivity even allows people to be a part of events that may not be happening in their own country through video and picture sharing.

Music



Annie (Tonga) and Sally (Palestine) had their group learn a worship song by a Christian pop group, Hillsong. The message here was that young women believe that there are more ways to worship than by sticking solely to hymns. Though many women enjoy hymns and respect the history behind their beautiful music, many of them are dated. By mixing in worship songs that are known in different countries, WDP can be personalized for the language that the service is in and feature songs that are popular now. This also allows for different ways of worshipping God: regardless of the songs being sung, God is being praised through various types of music. After all, even the oldest hymns were new at some point! Interestingly, all seven of the panel leaders knew the praise song that we chose: *Open the Eyes of my Heart*. Though we come from all over the world, we were able to unite and sing this popular worship song together. Our small groups of women sang it together and in three separate parts and, at the end of the whole session when all three groups returned for discussion, we sang together as a large group. It was very moving to see women from all ages and from all over the world coming together and singing this worship song together before sharing our small group experiences.

At the end of our session, we all came back to share our experiences that we had in each small group. We encouraged that the conversations that we shared be continued outside of the conference. By keeping these conversations going in our own countries, we believe that the women who were in Brazil can connect with members of their own communities to discuss ways that they might reach women of all ages from their own cultures. By asking young women what they want instead of trying to tell them what they want, we believe that a collaborative approach to WDP based on relationship formation will help women feel more involved in the WDP movement. We also believe that we should continue to share successes and failures with each other internationally: just because an approach used in Canada or Palestine was unsuccessful, that does not mean that it might not work in Botswana or Cuba! Or maybe something similar was tried in Greece and it is not until all of these ideas come together in India or Tonga that something effective is developed. We believe that WDP is more than just a day: it is a movement that has the power to unite people across the globe through prayer to work towards positive change. The movement is growing and, through prayer, relationship building, and by keeping these discussions going, we can work together to keep WDP functioning as an intergenerational movement that unites women from all corners of the world.

Facilitators: Tlamele Kebatenne (Botswana), Hungreiphy Zimik Awungshi (India), Lauren Wilks (Canada) Sona Galsty (Greece), Ruth Trueba (Cuba), Sally Ibrahim Ajar (Palestine), and Anne Lizqina Lehauli (Tonga).

Finding Women's Voice in the Bible Study Workshop Focus on WDP – Report

Ulrike Bechmann & Irene Tokarski (Germany/Austria)

Bible studies are very important in preparation and interpretation of the text that the women of World Day of Prayer are sending every year for the celebrations and activities. Bible texts are at the core of the worship service. This is the outline of the exercise done in the workshop that may be replicated elsewhere. Consider these questions: How to read the biblical texts from the perspective of women? How to find voices of women?

Some hermeneutical principles:

- One has to be attentive to the biblical text, it is important to read carefully and slowly;
- One has to be open for new insights and go beyond what has always known;
- Language and structure of the text are important tools: How is everything put together? What is said, what is missing? How are we able to find voices of women even if they are not present in the story?
- Look out for women in the text even if they do not play a role.
- If women are not mentioned ask yourself: What is told? What would it mean for women?

Bible reading group exercise:

- Read the Joshua 6 – “The Woman of Jericho”
- Reflect on the study written by Ulrike Bechmann below;
- Apply the questions and the hermeneutical principles as above;
- Form small groups, and talk about your reaction to the “Woman of Jericho.” What would we say to her?
- Conclude letting each group share its reaction and reflect on them to wrap up the session

The Woman of Jericho Exegesis and Dramatization as Feminist Hermeneutics

Ulrike Bechmann

The story of Sarah and Hagar provides hermeneutical guides for current European, feminist, interreligious dialogue (as I analyze in chapter 10), and shows that we must position ourselves and our context carefully in relation to the biblical stories - in other words, that we must engage in critical hermeneutics. A differentiated hermeneutics requires recognizing the complexity of the Bible. Texts from the distant past and from disparate backgrounds have been handed on as God's word in human words and preserved as a normative, collective memory for faith communities. The Bible came into being through a process of continuation and commentary that allowed for a variety of views. What is needed, therefore, is a differentiated access to the biblical texts.

In womanist theology, African American and African women identified with Hagar's life and fate and drew fresh strength and hope against their oppression. How, then, might a reader approach texts in which God does not side with the victims, but with the winners? This alliance with winners against victims is evident in Joshua 6, the battle of Jericho. This text, like the Abraham narratives, is often

related to the Israeli-Palestinian-Conflict and the promise of the Land.² The more-than-well-known story recounts how Joshua and the people of Israel come to Jericho, the fortified town. With trumpets and God's will the walls come down and Jericho is conquered (Josh 6:1-21). Bringing Jericho down is God's message and God's deed. The final verses read: "So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpets, they raised a great shout, and the wall fell down flat; so the people charged straight ahead into the city and captured it. Then they devoted to destruction by the edge of the sword all in the city, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys" (Joshua 6:20-21 NRSV). These verses convey the narrative perspective of the biblical text. Did not God directly destroy Jericho? Yet this perspective is not the only one possible. Even with God presented as being solely on the side of Joshua, the text offers an occasion to illustrate a hermeneutic of protest through identification with other characters in the narrative. An exegetical analysis provides a starting point. Historical analysis shows that the conquest story is entirely fictional and that Jericho was never conquered by the Israelites under Joshua.³ The story was composed during the exile to teach that during the time of the kingdoms Israel had not had the necessary trust in God to be able to maintain the land. The redaction of the text even incorporated military critical elements and strategies to instruct ancient communities not to imitate the Book of Joshua. That is, the stories of conquering the land with God's help themselves communicate that these elements are not to be repeated! Not even in the time of the Exile.⁴ But the reception of Joshua today is different; usually European or American readers tend to associate Joshua with the perspective of Israel; politically the story is used to explain the Israeli-Palestinian political conflict, especially the occupation of the West Bank since 1967.

The most popular way of recalling this story may be the African American traditional spiritual of the first half of the nineteenth century, "Joshua fits the battle of Jericho." The spiritual stems from a context where oppressed people needed walls to come down. Some situations are so difficult that no other solution is possible than to hope for a Joshua to come in order to obtain freedom. These people were far from being military conquerors. Today, however, many church people sing the spiritual. The problem starts when people identify themselves wrongly, when the strong side takes up this story to confirm that they are the ones to emulate Joshua. When one with military power identifies himself or herself with Joshua, violence and readiness to kill may be inevitable. For application, however, situations must be comparable and fit contextually in the sense that they correspond in their social structure. The Bible has a different message for the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, the aggressors and the victims. Even Joshua 6, however, in all its brutality may offer the chance to take a different stance. The story mentions persons that have no word on their own, but who are present, like the women of Jericho. Women are named as those who are killed (v. 21). The victims are present in the text and invite readers to see through their eyes. So imagine one woman of Jericho and her perspective.

The Jericho Woman *(to be performed following a reading of the Biblical text)*

² The World Council of Churches in Hofgeismar in 2012 held a conference on the use of the Book of Joshua and subsequently issued, "Message from the Conference in Hofgeismar," 27 February 2012, <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/public-witness-addressing-power-affirming-peace/middle-east-peace/message-from-conference-in-hofgeismar-germany>. Accessed July 26, 2013.

³ See Klaus Bieberstein, "Joshua – Jordan – Jericho" (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 143), (Fribourg: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1995); Kort van Bekkum, *From Conquest to Coexistence: Ideology and Antiquarian Intent in the Historiography of Israel's Settlement in Canaan* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

⁴ See Norbert Lohfink, "Landerobung und Heimkehr. Hermeneutik zum heutigen Umgang mit dem Josuabuch," *Jahrbuch Biblische Theologie* 12 (1997): 3-24.

"Hello. You don't know me, but we met already in the story. I'm a woman of Jericho. You don't know me by name—by the way, my name is Nachla—I'm one of the forgotten ones. But I'm there in the text, in the last verse you just heard: "...men and women, oxen, sheep and donkeys." You see – I'm one of these women. I want to meet you. You are going with Joshua?

Well, still the wall of Jericho is there and the gate is open. I'll show you around a bit if you like. You know, we live in a nice city. There is a spring that never dries up, not even in the summer. This spring is important, because Jericho can be hot, especially in summer. Because of the water we have all this greenery here! You can see a lot of fruit trees all around the city. And palms; there are plenty of them. Some call Jericho the "City of Palm Trees."

Look at the wall and the big gate. It is necessary to have it and to protect it well. We are a rich city! Many travelers and merchants are coming to our city and sometimes also enemies. Come with me down our main street; I'll show you our temple. Isn't it a fabulous building? Perhaps you can get a glimpse through the open door of all the silver and gold vessels that are in there! We are really very thankful to our goddess and gods to live in such a good place.

But come to my house. You must be thirsty. I can offer some milk and some fruits. Here is my house. Look, these are my children. I have three of them. Here, my daughter is twelve years old. Isn't she a beauty? And I can tell she is bright, too! I really have to find a good man for her who likes her. Oh, here comes my youngest child. He is three years old. He likes to play around with our donkey. And you know, we sometimes think that the donkey likes him best too.

But, look at the sun; time is running out. You have to hurry to join Joshua again. You must leave before the gate is closed. If the gate is closed, nobody can go out or in. So hurry up to go back. Tomorrow, when the sun rises, the wall will fall down. The city will be burnt. Joshua will take all the silver and gold for his God. You know, the God of Joshua has no mercy at all, not even for the old ones or the children. So go now, and tomorrow, when the walls come down, we will meet again—and then you will kill me."

Interpretation that presents not only the winners but also the victims enables us to see and hear differently. It offers the chance to think anew. What would be necessary to overcome war and destruction?

In 2005 I introduced the "Woman of Jericho" during a conference in Bethlehem. The ecumenical music group "Cross Culture" (Chicago) responded—and they proposed to sing the well-known spiritual instead as: "Listen to the woman of Jericho"⁵ Whoever is listening to the woman of Jericho is resisting the violence of a text of terror. Perhaps this woman may also point the way back to other contemporary contexts and current interreligious dialogues. The woman of Jericho invites readers to explore imaginatively and ethically the importance of gendered biblical hermeneutics in actual controversies and potential solutions. Her perspective sheds light on the dark side of stories of victory and triumph. Exploring such stories with gendered biblical hermeneutics may also allow one to see the "Other" in actual controversies with potential solutions.

⁵ The text was first published in Esther Epp-Tiessen, "People Dispossessed of the Land," in: *Under Vine and Fig Tree: Biblical Theologies of Land and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict*, ed. Alain Epp Weaver (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House 2007), 75-82.

Talking to the Writer Countries from 2017-2020 Workshop Focus on WDP – Report

Maral Haidostian, WDP Lebanon

Through this panel, the participants got enthusiastic about the programs from 2017 to 2020, and had a glimpse of the development of the theme, learnt about each country concerns, and got into the mood of the coming years.

Maral Haidostian, the moderator, welcomed the participants warmly, introduced each four presenters, and at the end led the question & answer period.

The first presenter, Dorothy Castro from the Philippines, shared the challenges of being a writer country which the whole world celebrated in March 2017. She explained the collective reflection that generated the artwork depicting the unfairness of Filipino society.

The second presenter, Rosana Pindon from Suriname, talked about her country with its diverse people and beautiful nature. She read a poem in the Sranan and English languages that reflects the mood in her country. The poem is called *One Tree*:

One Tree

One tree, so many leaves, one tree.

One river, so many creeks, all are going to one sea.

One head, so many thoughts, thoughts among, which one good one must be.

One God, so many ways of worshipping, but one Father.

One Suriname, so many hair types, so many skin colors, so many tongues, but one people.

The third presenter, Tanja Povsnar from Slovenia, presented the art work of 2019. She distributed postcards of the artwork after talking about and showing the picture of the artist herself.

The fourth presenter, Sylvia Marowa from Zimbabwe, showed the map of her country and explained some of their concerns. She also sang a song called *Zimbabwe will be Saved*.

The participants were attentive, gave good feedback, asked questions, and engaged very well with the creative presentations. They also had the chance to view the displays of related material on the tables.



Moderator: Maral Haidostian

Presenters: Philippines 2017 – Dorothy Castro, Suriname 2018 – Rosana Pindon, Slovenia 2019 – Tanja Povsnar, and Zimbabwe 2020 – Sylvia Marowa

Promovendo DMO no Brasil Relatório da Oficina sobre DMO

Leda M. Witter, DMO Brasil

Participantes: Mulheres da Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana do Brasil de Foz do Iguaçu e o P. Ednilson (19 pessoas); Igreja Episcopal Anglicana do Brasil (Rev. Elias Mayer Vergara e 2 mulheres); Igreja Católica – Diocese de Fóz do Iguaçu (2 mulheres); participantes da Angola (2 mulheres); Portugal (1 mulher); Igreja Metodista do Rio de Janeiro (4 mulheres), e 3 membros da diretoria DMO Brasil.

Após as apresentações das participantes foi explicado o que é o DMO, seu objetivo, e como funciona o Comitê Nacional e o Internacional. Os contatos para a promoção do DMO no Brasil foram compartilhados assim como o endereço do site e e-mails acompanhado do folder explicativo.

Em seguida abriu-se para perguntas, dúvidas e ou sugestões. Houve interesse em conhecer mais sobre a participação no movimento, sobre o material das celebrações, e os critérios de seleção e aprovação dos projetos beneficiados com a oferta dos cultos do DMO.

Após os esclarecimentos surgiram os desafios principalmente entre as igrejas locais presentes, que se interessaram em marcar o primeiro encontro para conversarem e se organizarem a fim de fazer a celebração em conjunto no ano de 2018.

As participantes de Angola e Portugal parabenizaram o DMO Brasil pela sua organização (diretoria, projetos e a divulgação do trabalho).

As representantes da Igreja Metodista informaram que também celebram o DMO juntamente com outras denominações.

Encerramos a oficina, onde todas as pessoas falaram da alegria de estarem participando desta atividade, e o agradecimento pela escolha da cidade de Foz do Iguaçu, como a cidade sede para acontecer este evento.



Mujeres Indígenas y el Cuidado por la Tierra Rueda de Sabiduría y cuidado @10 - Informe

Bianka Paz Carrera, DMO Guatemala

Si es cierto que el clima cambia de forma natural, pero el ritmo acelerado en el que estamos contaminando el medio ambiente ha producido cambios climáticos radicales.

Estos cambios en todo el mundo afectan de manera especial a las mujeres, dado que muchas de ellas se dedican a las quehaceres en el hogar, entre otras actividades.

En la presentación del estudio Francisca Pérez menciona que el conocimiento que tienen las mujeres indígenas dentro de sus comunidades forma parte de su propia cosmovisión -el n'ooj- o sistema de conocimiento indígena propio de una cultura, transmitido de generación en generación en su propio idioma materno (en mi caso el Poqomam) en forma oral, basado en los principios y valores de la espiritualidad maya dentro de una comunidad. Para este estudio donde entrevistó a 20 mujeres de diferentes grupos mayas, es así como perciben el tema de cambio climático (Ana Francisca Pérez Conguache, Pueblo Maya Poqomam, Guatemala).

Sin embargo, desde su cosmovisión, el cambio climático es percibido como una forma o señal en la que se manifiesta la fuerza, energía y vida de la propia naturaleza. Según ellas, los desastres naturales como lluvias, derrumbes, calores y fríos, responden al desequilibrio de la naturaleza manifestado en el trato a su cuerpo, lo que afecta aspectos como la alimentación, economía y salud, entre otros. Esto, además se visualiza a través de señales, por ejemplo cuando está lloviendo y al mismo tiempo hace demasiado calor.

Así mismo, ellas perciben el cambio climático como la manifestación de la madre naturaleza clamando ayuda y solicitando se le preste atención para valorarla, respetarla y cuidarla frente el daño que se le hace en el corazón de la tierra.

Según estudios de algunas(os) hermanas(os) mayas, nuestra cosmovisión enseña que los lagos, ríos, mares, sol, volcanes, son nuestros hermanos mayores y por lo tanto les debemos amor y respeto. Además, nuestras(os) guías espirituales dicen "*La naturaleza no me pertenece, yo formo parte de la naturaleza*" (Wajxaqib' No'j, 2003). Esta frase nos lleva a la reflexión que el ser humano ha perdido el respeto por la naturaleza y la ve como un recurso que hay que explotar y sacarle provecho económicamente sin cuidarlo.



La Defensoría de la Mujer Indígena en su primer informe, haciendo énfasis en el tema de los bosques comunales, señala que "*las mujeres indígenas también son discriminadas cuando la tierra es de propiedad comunal, al no ser consultadas a la hora de tomar decisiones respecto a los recursos naturales comunitarios*" (Mujeres Indígenas, territorialidad y biodiversidad en el contexto latinoamericano, p 145).

Enfoque de género desde la perspectiva del pueblo maya

En la concepción maya, el varón y la mujer son complementarios, uno no puede desarrollarse sin la otra y viceversa. Guardan su integridad y su especificidad, para conformar la eterna unidad.

Es así como el vínculo de las mujeres indígenas guatemaltecas con la tierra es productivo, reproductivo, social y espiritual. Los bosques y la tierra son para ellas sagrados, la tierra se considera la madre que facilita los alimentos, es el sitio donde está ubicado el hogar y el huerto, así como el lugar donde se produce la convivencia comunitaria y el trabajo colectivo.

En la filosofía maya, la palabra winäq significa dos conceptos en uno, femenino y masculino en forma plural. Los dos conceptos están ligados, es decir, en la lógica de la palabra winäq existe una relación del uno con el otro. En el concepto de la dualidad y complementariedad existe una interdependencia al decir winäq. La teoría de género, desde la visión de las culturas indígenas, considera que todos los elementos y valores interactúan y forman parte de un todo. Entre ellos se encuentran: respetar la vida de la otra persona, ser lo más humano, respetar a nuestros hermanos mayores de la creación, los animales, las plantas, las aves y a las otras culturas.

Podemos decir que la cosmovisión maya busca el respeto de la vida de animales, de las plantas y de las personas. No considera a las personas como seres superiores dotados de un hábito divino exclusivo; así mimos, le asigna sensibilidad a las cosas como los utensilios de cocina y los instrumentos de trabajo.



La cosmovisión maya señala que todos los seres viven acorde a cierto orden y tienen percepción del cosmos, se organizan e interactúan con la naturaleza y sus leyes, y manejan la energía para garantizar el futuro. La cosmovisión maya busca el equilibrio de nuestras relaciones con la madre naturaleza y todo lo que en ella existe: plantas animales, y cosas con vida y sin vida; así como con nuestros semejantes o el otro yo (Conocimientos tradicionales y biodiversidad, p 146).

Importancia del conocimiento tradicional

La pérdida acelerada de la diversidad biológica representa no solamente una pérdida de genes, especies y ecosistemas, sino que también debilita la base de la diversidad cultural humana que ha evolucionado con ella y depende de su existencia. La pérdida de prácticas culturales y lenguas de las comunidades indígenas y locales conlleva la pérdida de conocimientos tradicionales relativos a la biodiversidad, las innovaciones y prácticas

La transmisión de conocimientos ancestrales y su adaptación a los nuevos tiempos serán una herramienta fundamental de las comunidades para la supervivencia material y cultural (Pia Escobar Gutierrez, p.37).

*Sabemos que toda la creación todavía gime a una,
como si tuviera dolores de parto.
Y no sólo ella, sino también nosotros mismos,
que tenemos las primicias del Espíritu, gemimos interiormente,
mientras aguardamos nuestra adopción como hijos,
es decir, la redención de nuestro cuerpo.
Romanos 8:22-23 (NVI)*

Romanos 8:21 leemos sobre la creación, y su liberación de la esclavitud; en este sentido refiriéndose a toda la creación, esto incluye a las personas que no son cristianas, a los animales, las plantas, la tierra, y las estrellas. El punto clave sería; la liberación de la esclavitud. No separados los cristianos y las cristianas de la creación, sino en solidaridad con ella pues somos humanas y creación de Dios.

METODOLOGIA

- Conversación sobre como el clima ha cambiado y como lo perciben cada una en sus países.
- Dinámica en donde cada una representando un elemento de la naturaleza tomando una cinta de color se unía a las otras incluyendo a las personas.
- Conversación final, con los compromisos comunitarios y personales sobre la relación de nosotras con el resto de la creación.

Reciclaje Como Acto de Cuidado Rueda de Sabiduría y cuidado @10 - Informe

Coromoto Jimenez de Salazar, DMO Venezuela

El taller estuvo centrado en la presentación del tema, y se desarrollaron los siguientes tópicos: ¿Que es el reciclaje? ¿Por qué?, ¿Cómo y para que reciclar?

Desarrollo del Taller

En el centro del Salón se colocaron algunos envases y materiales de desechos para ambientar el Taller, como vasos, bolsas, cartón, papel, madera, entre otros. Y en el centro un cartel con el tema del taller y otro que decía: Reciclable – Tú Decides.

Tomando como referencia el Tema “Mujeres Indígenas y el Cuidado por la Tierra” presentado por Bianca Paz, se planteó la importancia del cuidado de nuestra tierra y sus recursos, ya que de una u otra manera todas pertenecemos a una casa en común que nos cobija a todas y todos por igual, manifestando el respeto que debemos tener con nuestros ancestros, y los pueblos originarios.

Se desarrolló el tema comenzando de manera interactiva preguntando qué significaba Reciclar. Las participantes se mostraron abiertas a dar la definición de manera explícita y muy acertada, mostrando su mejor actitud ante la importancia del tema.

Fue muy motivador y logramos reflexionar acerca de la importancia de educar y hacer campañas en nuestras comunidades para prevenir la contaminación de nuestros ambientes, del agua, y en pro de embellecer el ambiente. Además se habló de la importancia de que en nuestras iglesias y comunidades existan lugares que estén destinados con envases y contenedores para distribuir los residuos Plástico (Amarillo), Vidrio (Verde), cartón (Azul). En la conversación nos dimos cuenta que en nuestras comunidades muy pocas son las que tienen esa disciplina ambientalista, lo cual genero un alerta en nuestras hermanas y se comprometieron a comenzar a realizar proyectos del cuidado del ambiente en sus comunidades, hogares y lugares de trabajo.

La Regla de la 3R

Reducir: acciones para reducir la producción de objetos susceptibles de convertirse en residuos, con medidas de compra racional, uso adecuado de los productos, compra de productos sostenibles.

Reciclar: el conjunto de operaciones de recogida y tratamiento de residuos que permiten reintroducirlos en un ciclo de vida. Se utiliza la separación de residuos en origen para facilitar los canales adecuados.

Reutilizar: acciones que permiten el volver a usar un determinado producto para darle una segunda vida, con el mismo uso u otro diferente. Medidas encaminadas a la reparación de productos y alargar su vida útil.

¿Qué podemos reciclar y cómo?



Reciclar es darles una nueva vida a los envases, reduciendo el consumo de recursos y la degradación del planeta. Aquí te contamos los materiales reciclables más comunes de nuestro día a día:

Plástico

Reducir su consumo, reutilizar y reciclar son las tres acciones

básicas para reducir su impacto, ya que el plástico tarda alrededor de 700 años en degradarse. Por eso, es importante depositar en el **contenedor amarillo** las botellas de agua, de detergente, el bote de champú o las bolsas de patatas.

Latas

Este tipo de envase está siempre presente en nuestra cocina. ¿Quién no tiene una lata de refresco o de conservas en el frigorífico? Las latas están compuestas de aluminio y se pueden reciclar un número ilimitado de veces. ¡Al **contenedor amarillo**!

Papel y cartón

Revistas, periódicos viejos, caja de cereales, de zapatos... todos deben ir al **contenedor azul** para ser reciclados y ayudar a reducir la sobreexplotación de los recursos naturales.

Vidrio

Este material se puede volver a reutilizar mediante un proceso de lavado de desechos o a través de su fundición y puede ser reciclado al 100% una cantidad indefinida de veces. Para ello debemos separarlos del resto de materiales. ¡Al **contenedor verde**!

Compromiso

Todas nos comprometimos en servir como medios de concientización y capacitación en nuestras comunidades de fe, familia, niños, jóvenes, mujeres, hombres, y hacer cotidiana esta conversación. Además en nuestra labor como mujeres evangelizadoras debemos aprovechar nuestra sabiduría para promocionar la justicia ambiental. Para nuestra celebración usaremos material reciclado para la ambientación y además usaremos pantallas para proyectar la liturgia. Seremos más creativas realizando los recuerditos acostumbrados con material de desecho, estaremos contribuyendo así al cuidado de nuestra creación y honraremos el tema de SURINAM 2018: **¡Toda la Creación Dios es buena!**

Concluimos con la afirmación de que somos MUJERES CRISTIANAS COMPROMETIDAS Y EMPODERADAS, en la defensa de la justicia y equidad de género. Además, invite a todas a leer en relación con la UNESCO y los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS)



Women Leading Change Talking Wisdom and Care @10 – Report

Catherine Mudime Akale, WDP Cameroon

Objective: To build our movement and strengthen our capacity to be present to the communities.

Purpose: To create leadership opportunity based on collaboration, ministry, professional work, personal skills, using wisdom, and care to guide our theological journey for environmental justice.

Key Words: Wisdom, Care, Theological Journey, Environmental Justice (EJ for short).

Key Biblical Text: Genesis 2:15 “Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden to tend and keep it”. (“Tend” carries the idea of service, to “keep” is to “guard” and “preserve”).

Introductory Remarks

Welcome to this special session where we are, hopefully, going to converse on the link between biblical teaching on creation & social justice, in regard to major environmental challenges of our time and context, and personally reflect on these questions: Is Environmental Justice a Christian value? How and why?

What initiatives can we, as women leaders and change agents in our communities employ, to achieve the kind of change aimed at sustaining our environment as God charged us to do in Genesis 2:15? This session is to enable us plot out the environmental future we desire, as well as the environmental legacy we want to bequeath to our youth. As women leaders, we are already playing meaningful roles in nurturing, providing, educating, managing, and supporting interventions at different levels in our society. We are already leading change in our various contexts and are being challenged to change attitudes and practices in the environmental crisis confronting the world right now.



I start on the premise that there is no one agreed-upon definition of Environmental Justice. All in all, the idea of Environmental Justice is simple - it means everyone should have the right to live in a clean and healthy environment. It is as much about people as it is about issues like pollution and climate change. What Environmental Justice does is to link the concepts of ecology and social justice. It highlights the strong relationship that exists between the ecological question, issues of justice, peace and defense of the rights of individuals and peoples. EJ calls for the fair treatment of all races, cultures, income classes and educational levels, with respect to the development and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies.

Fair treatment implies that no population should be forced to shoulder a disproportionate share of exposure to the negative effects of pollution, or other environmental dangers, due to lack of political or economic strength. In the EJ system the poorest lose their lands, suffer the wars provoked by the great powers over natural resources, and whose lands are turned into dumps for the trash of the rich. The poor are forced to leave their homes and lands in many parts of the world increasingly because of environmental causes like drought, floods, desertification, mud-slides, tsunamis, and the disappearances of species. Those uprooted by such disasters are increasingly referred to as “environmental refugees” or “climate change refugees”. It is the poor who most suffer the consequences of such ecological crisis. The general belief therefore is that the quality of human life is tied to the quality of the environment.

The impact of human induced climate change disproportionately affects the poor and vulnerable who live in developing countries. They suffer the greatest effects of a global problem they have done least to create. These effects include major natural disasters, lack of food security, inadequate access to clean safe water and increasing health risk.

The Environmental Justice issue is not altogether straightforward. It has been said that environmental abuse directly and negatively affects human communities and also disproportionately affects lower classes in all countries, especially the poorer countries. While some subscribe to the view that putting human beings at the center of environmental debate is a grave error... “because they are the perpetrators of environmental problems in the first place”, environmental activists maintain that some humans, especially the poor, are also victims of environmental destruction and pollution...”

At this juncture, I invite us all to reflect on the concrete reality of our own lives and ministry as women of a global prayer movement and on the issues that affect our communities and environment. In our own corner of the world, we too need to take the time to study the reality of the world around us, to feel the suffering of the earth and how it is related to the suffering of the people. Possible examples of issues related to the environmental justice might include energy issues, mining, garbage, toxic waste, use of plastic bags and plastic bottles.

Conclusion: There is an African proverb that says: “When you pray, move your feet.” To this, we might add; not only your feet, but join hands, link arms and speak up.” Enhancing women’s leadership competences will lead to social justice, income generating projects, making healthy decisions and serving as role models to younger women. By doing so, we will be changing the world from where we are.

In this regard, let the following questions guide us in our conversation to seek ways and means to empower ourselves and our communities through education, training, outreach and action:

1. What are the principal environmental problems where you are? Who benefits from them?
2. How do these problems affect the lives of the people in your context / region?
3. What groups work to address these problems?
4. How might we become involved in addressing problems of Environmental Justice in our region?

For the second session, the conversations were also informed and informative and key among the Environmental Justice issues in our daily lives to express our care for the following:

- The need to mobilize women to improve the air quality of carbon-monoxide, generator-infested Nigeria.
- The organization of protests and petitions against reservoirs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- Lebanese women are concerned about the destruction of the Cedars of Lebanon through “the cutting down of mountains and rocks into gravel for building purposes.” This activity is often carried out by politically and financially influential people. Villagers have been blocking routes to the mountain regions by lying down as human shields but the protests cannot be sustained for long and so the activities continue when they leave. No sustainable solution in sight.

- In the Philippines the actions include tree planting, cleaning of the coastal lands and the segregation of rubbish.
- In the Bahamas, waste disposal and the removal of damaged abandoned litter all over and surpassing the human population, are the issues they are mobilizing around.
- In Fiji, the multiple issues of the use of non-degradable plastic shopping bags, stone crushing industries that create flooding during the rains. Petitions stopped the activities for a while only. The struggle continues with church women holding vigils to sensitize the public. There is also the issue of over-fishing. Workshops were organized to create awareness on fallow periods, fish sizes, and periods of abstinence to allow the fish to multiply. Chinese farms create deforestation and are destroying the Fijian organic farming culture.
- Shell-fishing along the shore and the proliferation of shopping plastic bags are destroying the environment and creating floods, those are the major issues women are fighting against. They are engaged in replanting trees to prevent land erosion.
- In Thailand the main EJ issue is the discontinuation of normal seeds and the enforced use of fertilized seeds that can be supplied by one influential Chinese business man. Strongly supported by the Government. The women are mobilizing on boycotting the products.
- In Slovenia, the multiple issues they are campaigning against and mobilizing for include: Home gardening in small groups that exchange seeds and carry out sensitization exhibitions, including hybrids; campaign against child labor; once a year they carry out cleaning and collect plastic bags for recycling.
- In South Africa, women and school children collect and hand over plastic bags & broken bottles to supermarkets for recycling.
- EWNJ are teaming up with those already working on Environmental Justice Issues.



- The German WDP want to begin at home - by changing some of their office practices by using recycled paper, ecological ink, no more use of white paper and encourage their women to do same.
- In DRC, deforestation and the use of wood and charcoal for fuel are the major challenge they are up against. One major response to the use of plastic shopping is turning them, through crocheting, into ornamental objects- bags, table mats, hats.

The two conversations illustrated how understanding and defining Environmental Justice is essential for the implementation of their options. They helped assess the current level of understating of the Environmental Justice issues they are facing and their effects on human lives, like the health effects of common mining technological techniques and carbon monoxide gas from numerous generators. It enabled the attendees to share their experiences on organizing around the issue, thereby revealing the numerous ways women around the globe are organizing against Environmental Injustice.

The sessions laid down a rich foundation within the World Day of Prayer family movement for further action after listening to some good practices to be replicated if and when faced with similar situations, and by so doing, contributing importantly to the promotion of Environmental Justice at every local level where the World Day of Prayer women are leading the way for change.

Kimono Dressing for Peace Talking Wisdom and Care @10 – Report

Mayumi Hara and Megumi Maejima, WDP Japan

The focus of the small group conversation was Peace and Reconciliation. We started the conversation demonstrating how Japanese women wear Kimonos. Megumi spoke about how Japanese women love to wear traditional Kimonos; however when war broke out the Japanese nationalistic group forced women to avoid wearing kimonos to be able to work during the war. Women had to cut the long sleeves off of the kimonos and wear pants. The Kimono is our symbol for peace; we wear it for celebrations, weddings and special ceremonies now.

着物から学ぶ平和と和解

原・前島



Mayumi spoke about how Japanese the Baptist Women's Union (JBU) started after the Pacific war. Japan was isolated after the war, as it lost after the invasion of Asia. The first women's leader of JBU attended the World Baptist Congress in the midst of an unwelcoming atmosphere. The chairman encouraged her saying "Welcome Japan, our friend!" and the audience responded with a warm welcome. After the congress she became leader of the Asian Baptist Women Union.



When the first Asian Baptist Women's Union Conference was held in Japan, there was still some conflict between Japanese and women from other countries in Asia. Japanese women tried to prepare well to welcome Asian women. During the meeting, one woman shared that she did not want come to Japan, because Japanese soldiers had raped and killed members of her family, but she was moved by the sisterhood of Japanese women in Christ. A Japanese woman apologized for the behavior of the Japanese soldiers and said that they didn't know that country's situation and that she also had a brother who was killed and the house burned during war.

Those testimonies were instrumental to a reconciliation process that began with Asian women during the beautiful Sakura season in the spring.

Responses of the participants from the two sessions:

Brazil – We face conflicts inside the church, where the leadership is centralized, and the members just listen and accept it. The immigrant community is dehumanized by local people in power.

Lithuania – Lithuania has been under the control of many different countries until its independence in 1990, and still, there are so many hidden conflicts among people from different backgrounds, such as Russians, the Polish, and Lithuanians.

Luxemburg – 40% of the population are immigrants and there are many refugees. There is a need for integration and that has not been an easy process.

Suriname – There are immigrants that come looking for jobs, and we live in harmony.

Hong Kong - After the 1997 conflicts between HK & mainland China, freedom, liberty, and equality are demanded values.

Taiwan - The conflicts between Mainland China and Taiwan has isolated Taiwan from the international alliance.

Romania – The conflicts between Romania and Hungary affected education and language, for example, and the churches try to build relationships amongst themselves.

France – There are some conflicts with the African communities in France, and there is an effort from the churches to welcome the Muslims and Buddhists, so they can all live in peace.

India – The North part of India experiences conflict with Myanmar and the terrorist groups that are installed there.

South Africa – The reconciliation process that started in 1994 is a slow work in progress.

Nigeria – The Christian communities in the Northeast fear violence.

Bahamas – We are concerned about domestic violence.

Italy - Peace and reconciliation now in Italy, involves overcoming fear of refugees from Libya and other parts of the world.

Austria - We need to know each other's situation, so we can pray and help each other in Christ. World Day of Prayer can be a tool for that process.

Conclusion: Let's increase communication to reach out for peace, as the Bible said "blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called daughters of God."

Empowering Orthodox Women Talking Wisdom and Care @10 – Report

Saramma Varghese, WDP India

I am glad that women from other denominations decided to participate. I explained that women are not ordained in the orthodox churches. In ancient times, there were deaconesses serving women, but the patriarchal system is prevalent in the orthodox churches. Still women take leadership in the choirs and Sunday schools. In the local churches women are allowed to have voting rights in the parish assembly, but at the higher level they are not given the privilege to be in the managing committee.

I come from India. It's our tradition that St. Thomas came to India in AD52, and that he converted the Brahmins and Nairs to Christianity. He landed in Cranganore and enabled people to build churches. The people who got converted followed the liturgy and prayers and continued their lives as orthodox Christians. The Brahmins opposed St. Thomas in Mylapore, and he was speared to death there. Later his body was taken to Edessa.



The Portuguese came later and other missionaries also came to India and started converting people to Christianity. The St. Thomas Christians were not willing to be converted to catholic faith and they resisted it. After the Synod of Diamper they established their independence and remained as orthodox Christians.

Earlier in my church, after the baptism, the male children were taken to the altar. Recently after baptism, the female children are also taken to the altar and they are also blessed there. Women were not allowed to read the Bible when the Eucharist was being conducted. Now the orthodox women are allowed to read the Old Testament, but this does not happen in my church.

In our liturgy, we pray to Mother Mary, and other saints. We conduct the death anniversaries and the prayers for the dead at the tomb. We practice fasting during the Lenten season. Our monks and nuns show us the good ways of praying to God.

Confession is also there in our churches. The priests are able to understand others, their sufferings, spiritual and psychological problems and they give good advice. As an orthodox woman it is very important for us to impart the faith and values to the next generation. An orthodox woman needs to have a thorough knowledge of church history and also of its doctrines. Our seminary in Nagpur allows women to have admission to the seminary and there are women teaching there.

Talking about wisdom and care

Women are the backbone of the churches in their respective parishes and homes. A mother has an important role in raising children and keeping the family together. Children learn many good manners from the mother. John Chrysostom says, "If from the beginning, we teach them to love true wisdom, they will have more wealth and glory than riches can ever provide." (Homilies on Ephesians, Homily XXI) The story of Martha and Mary (Luke 10, 38 - 42) speaks about wisdom and care. Mary was eager to learn from Jesus, so she sat at his feet in humility, while Martha served him. Mary wanted wisdom and faith

and Martha showed care for him. So we need to be humble and be aware to care for people and to have wisdom.

Rev. Eunice Onyeukwu Kalu from the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria said that in her church women are ordained as priests and they are given a congregation to do the pastoral work. Women give sacraments, do baptisms and join people in marriage. They teach the Bible, conduct prayer meetings and do evangelism.



Nnemoa Florence N Uche of the Methodist Church in Nigeria said that they have women's work department with a female deaconess as the coordinator. The department has a board that looks at the affairs of women ministry. This department encompasses the activities of the girl child from age 3 to 17 years old, the older girls, known as daughters of Wesley, from age 18 to 30. The wife of the head of the Methodist leader chairs the board of the women's work and sends their

recommendations to the main conference body. The church trains the female members as ministers. They are given free hands to exercise their God given gift to lead the women, children and young people through teaching, praying, preaching and counseling. The women are having a major role in the Methodist church in Nigeria.

Patricia Pennant, Head of Women's League from the Methodist church in Jamaica, said that they have male and female ministers and the head is an elected bishop. Women are also ordained as deacons who are mainly in charge of women's work and women's affairs. They have a women's organization in the churches called the Women's League. There is an executive that oversees all of these Leagues in the country

Upoko Tuariki from the Presbyterian Church of the Cook Islands said that she is the wife of a deacon. In their church they don't have women deacons and there are no ordained women preachers or pastors in the Cook Island churches, but a lot of work in the church is done by women. She is the secretary of the women's organization in their church, a position changeable every 2 years. They conduct women's fellowships, workshops sewing classes and also medicine classes. Bible studies are also held for both women and Sunday School children and they do home visits for the elderly and the disabled. She has the aim to do more to help the destitute and they think of sharing food to uplifting them.

The only one orthodox woman who came to the seminar was Camelia Basta from the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt. Rev. Pope Tawadros, the head of the Coptic Orthodox Church lives in Egypt. Services in the church are given daily and on Fridays and Sundays, twice. Due to the attacks on the churches everywhere in Egypt, the churches (all denominations) are secured by police. Nevertheless, all churches are always more than full in all the services. Women in Egypt are powerful in all the churches. They are members and heads in many activities, but they are not allowed to preach in the churches.

The seminar was a good experience and women from different countries and different churches responded. Some of the women had privileges in their churches and did leadership roles. As an orthodox woman I told them about my experience in the church and the need to empower orthodox women in our Churches.

Reaching out to Children Talking Wisdom and Care @10 – Report

Janice Soyer-Delaney, WDP Trinidad and Tobago

There were two groups totaling more than thirty who engaged in sharing on the theme. They were from the various regions where WDP is organized and represented in many different contexts.

Ministry being done sought to affirm that children are people too, that children's rights are human rights, and that adults have a responsibility to the children. This is being acknowledged as we nurture and care for the children, respect and include them in our activities.

We shared the situation of children around the globe. Some mentioned the children who are trafficked; children who are sent to work and are expected to bring home a stated amount of money otherwise they are left without food; children who raise themselves after the death of their father during war and the death of their mother due to HIV/AIDS.

In one instance there is a very high infant mortality rate since the parents refuse to have the children inoculated, fearing that it will have the effect of causing autism or other problems.

Creative in their responses, some of the solutions to mitigate these issues included the following:

- ✓ Partnering with the health authorities and giving vouchers and basic necessities to the parents who bring their children for inoculation. This has resulted in the reduction of the high infant mortality rate.
- ✓ Having all-day weekly activities at the church or a Christian boot camp where the children are taught about Jesus Christ, given a meal, taught about human sexuality, and participate in sessions to build their self-esteem. They can be taught social graces, and also to read and write.
- ✓ Create soup kitchens to provide meals, assist the children with homework help sessions, or teach how to read and write

It was acknowledged that the church, the home, and the government must work together to transform the life of the children as we focus on protecting them, affording them to participate in life and as we take responsibility for climate change and its impact on human life.



WDP Pilot Project with Young Women Talking Wisdom and Care @10 – Report

Catherine MacKeil, WDP Canada

As executive director of Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada, we recently hosted a successful "Connect Three" workshop in Halifax, Nova Scotia. While inspired by World Day of Prayer material, it was also discussion-focused and featured local justice issues. Participants found it challenging and engaging, and they appreciated the inter-generational dynamic.



Our research showed that younger women want events that are:

- Organic
- Less structured
- Interactive; can contribute their knowledge (not just "talked to")
- Brief
- Excellent use of time
- Relationship-driven

*Adapted from focus groups conducted across Canada by SCM 2015

Our strategies for planning the pilot:

- Found a couple of passionate younger women and empower them to lead, including:
 - o Event name and logo
 - o Venue, timing, local social justice speaker, guest list
- Encouraged them to invite their friends & networks (personal invite is still best marketing tool)
- Adapted language (e.g. "event" or "retreat" rather than "service")
- Chose convenient day/weekend, not necessarily WDP Friday: March 31 – April 1, 2017
- Encouraged values of ecumenism and inclusivity

Tips on planning:

- Engage potential attendees online
- Registration via email or Facebook
- Collect donations rather than registration fee
- Make planning groups a short-term commitment (entire process was two months)
- Keep it flexible, as numbers are not confirmed in advance – could be more or less than expected
- Eliminate lunch planning problems by asking participants to bring a bag lunch or order pizza when everyone arrives



Pilot Event Schedule

- Worship team – 15 min
 - o Younger women on worship team
 - o Empower them to choose relevant songs (they chose contemporary music)
 - o Several songs at start rather than songs throughout service
- Teaching – 40 min
 - o Speakers included young PhD students studying human trafficking
 - o Role of Christians in social justice (substitute for WDP meditation)
 - o Challenge to become involved in personal, local and global action for justice
- WDP Philippines (selected excerpts from worship booklet)
 - o Voices from Women Seeking Economic Justice: 3 younger women read Filipino stories
 - o Confession: responsive reading using overhead screen to involve everyone
 - o Assurance of Pardon: read aloud
- Smaller discussion groups of 8-12 people
 - o Talk about the teaching or questions provided on handout
 - o Pray for women in Philippines
 - o Pray for local and national justice issues
- Offering
 - o Opportunity to donate to cover retreat expenses and support grant development projects in Canada and around the world.

Constructive feedback: Younger women are not used to excluding men in social justice groups (e.g. invite all to come together to solve human trafficking and environmental issues)

- o Note that the local team had decided to host it as a women-only retreat

Here are a couple ways you could adapt World Day of Prayer to your group:

- Discussion circles - Conversation Café on topics you want to discuss
- Local speakers exploring your region's justice issues
- Flexible worship styles
- New timing: try a lunch, retreat or event on a different day or month to accommodate working women and students
- Continue connecting as a local group with a reading club to learn together

Learning Method	Knowledge Retention Rate	
1. Lecture	5%	PASSIVE
2. Reading	10%	
3. Audio/Visual	20%	
4. Demonstration	30%	PARTICIPATORY
5. Group Discussion	50%	
6. Practice by Doing	75%	
7. Teaching others	90%	

*Adapted from the American National Training Laboratories, Maine

Welcoming Refugees – Inclusiveness Talking Wisdom and Care @10 – Report



Lene Johnson and Inge-Lise Lollike, WDP Denmark

Representatives from 12 different countries participated in the conversation. We had three questions: Are there refugees and/or migrants in your country? Is there any program that assists them? Who are developing those programs? All countries were challenged by refugee situations, and dealing with questions about handling, integrating, incorporating and welcoming as the number increased.

Albania: It is a “through-way” country with many, many more refugees than they are able to help; the refugees don’t want to stay in Albania. People share what they can with the refugees.

Bahamas: Many refugees from Haiti. Refugee assistance is run by the state, but it is the churches which serve the people. They are looking for getting hired, and then get a legal status.

Czech Republic: The churches educate volunteers to go to refugee camps in Greece and help those there, whom are mostly refugees from Afghanistan and Syria.

Guyana: Refugees and migrants come from Cuba.

Italy: Countless amounts of refugees and so many tragedies in the Mediterranean Sea. The city of Riace has integrated the refugees very, very well.

Luxemburg: The Ex-Yugoslavian people are now asked to go back to their place, where they lived before the civil war. 47 % of the population in Luxemburg now consists of other nationalities/ “foreign” nationalities.

The Netherlands: There are many economic refugees; many disappeared from the refugee camps.

Slovakia: The refugees come from East Ukraine.

South Africa: The country has no plans to assist the refugees; they come from Zimbabwe, Somalia, Nigeria, and Malawi.

Sweden: Refugees in a big number from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. The state has a plan for refugees. Churches are helping very much.

Switzerland: Too many economic refugees.

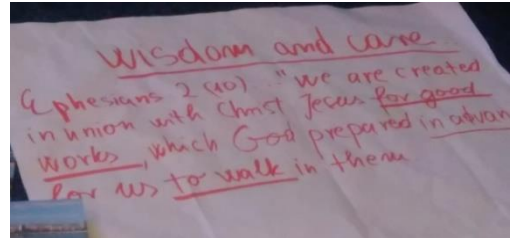
Syria: Work among refugees is done by local churches together.

Denmark: There are a high number of refugees from previous years from Ex-Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Eritrea, and Somalia. In the last couple of years most have come from Syria, but the policy of our country during the last 2 years has become stricter with taking in refugees. Many Churches/congregations and NGO’s are doing a lot to welcome the new comers, but Denmark sure could do more!

Ecumenical Response to Crisis Talking Wisdom and Care @10 – Report

Marija Parnicki, WDP Serbia & Senka Sestak Peterlin, WDP Croatia

Concept of the workshop: Welcome to the Talking wisdom and Care conversation where we will attempt to give an answer to “What can we do?” Or, are we all failing our responsibility? I will show you, through examples from Serbia, what the response of Christians from “the West” was to the crises in SRB.



1991-1995 - War and refugees from Bosnia and Croatia

2014 - Floods in western Serbia, Vojvodina, landslides

1992-1996 - Embargo and hyperinflation

2015 - 1 million migrant/refugees roaming through Serbia

1998 – Earthquake in central Serbia

2017- Drought and fire emergencies

1999 – NATO bombarding, more refugees from Kosovo

The Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization (EHO) has in the past 25 years served urgent and humanitarian aid to people in need and those affected by natural disasters by the means of food, clothing, or small grants. We issue calls to Christians in the local churches to get involved in this work, and for those who do so we give logistic support. Development aid is consisted of empowering the most vulnerable groups on situations like flood house repairs, restoration of livestock, and education.

After the brief information based on Serbia, we invited the participants to share their experiences based on their own countries and their insights on where they see wisdom and concern for the creation. What can our churches and we do to bring relief? There are some concrete steps that we can take, at a personal level, and as a community of faith to challenge that situation when we realize the intersections between environmental degradation and the racial, social, and economic inequities.

Conclusion: We agreed that behind an environmental crisis there is always people's greed and love of money. The environmental crisis is also a crisis of global justice and we, Christians, are responsible for not-doing enough and keeping silent. We have allowed a space for multiplication of injustice and that everyone seeks their own interest. God's justice always means loving and sacrificial self-giving, however we prefer our own comfort.

“Everything is ready – Come!” God has created everything well and prepared everything for life on earth. Good deeds were prepared in advance and they wait for us to draw blessings from them. We live with the hope and belief that people have the means, and increasingly the will, to make things right - to focus on justice, peace and integrity of creation.



Situation of Roma People Talking Wisdom and Care @10 – Report

Nataša Egić, WDP Slovenia

Throughout the conversation, we learned about the life, tradition, culture and faith of my people – the Roma people. We live on all continents of the world, even though the conversation focused on the Slovenian Roma and the Roma from the former Yugoslav republics.

We learned that we are very similar despite of our differences. That made the workshop very successful, because we were able to break down a number of prejudices and stereotypes applied to the Roma.

Background

The Romans are supposed to come from India, but according to one theory, their origin is in the province of PANDŽAP, which is confirmed by the word PAUNCH, which in the Roma language means five. Other theories, place the origin on the province HINDUKUSHA. Large migrations started around the 9th century, but the cause is still not fully understood. The migration took place in three directions: across Russia then continued to the north and west, Turkey and the Balkans, and towards Hungary. Ireland's Roma are the only Roma travelers originating from Europe and not India.



The Roma in Slovenia are concentrated in four locations: Dolenjska, Prekmurje - where I am from – Gorenjska, and Kočevje. Roma's live in other areas but in most cases they are immigrants from other republics of the former Yugoslavia.

How many Roma live in Slovenia? According to demographics in 2002, 3,246 people identified as Roma, and 3,834 people chose the Roma language as their mother tongue.

According to humanitarian organizations, the Red Cross, the Caritas, and the Center for Social Work, there are 10,000-12,000 Roma people in Slovenia.

The Life of the Roma: Past and Present

The main cell was and still is a family. Most often, an extended family of grandparents, children, grandchildren and unmarried aunts and uncles live together. Despite the patriarchy, an old mother played a special role. Her opinion and decisions were respected and taken into account.

Money was mostly provided by working men. Typical occupations were blacksmiths, horsemen, umbrellas repairers, knives and scissors grinder.

The Roma were also known as good musicians. Women were begging and dealing with fortune-telling. They were known as collectors of herbs and medicinal plants. Today these typical professions are gone. There are still stereotypes about the Roma people such as they are lazy, irresponsible, or people who do not like to work. But experience shows us a different picture. If the Roma gets an opportunity where he/she is respected, he/she will perform the work responsibly and diligently.

Education

According to the law, the education of the Roma should be based on the principle of integration. At school, children are mixed together, except for only one school, which is set up right in the Roma settlement. Most of the children, ages one to six years old, are enrolled in pre-school education, that is, until they enter elementary school. Departments are mixed and located in different units. In Slovenia, elementary education starts at six years of age and lasts nine years.

Education is mandatory for all children. According to Amnesty International, there is no official data, but only about 70% of the children are expected to attend school regularly, and only about 50% completed education. The reasons for this situation are different. They can be absenteeism, early maternity, or marriage.



The middle school enrollment is increasing, but unfortunately very few Roma attend. Fortunately, there are quite a few Roma who can access university education and master's degrees.

Faith

The Roma have always accepted the religion of the community in which they lived. They wanted to gain the affection of the locals and at the same time avoid persecution. The Roma in Slovenia are mostly Catholic.

They believe in God. Mary, mother of Jesus, has a great role in Roma's spirituality. She is the link between them and Jesus/God. However, they visit church only on special occasions: weddings, funerals, baptisms, Christmas and Easter. Sunday worship is attended by only a few believers. Every year there are massive pilgrimages to Mary's center, such as Brezje, Medjugorje, Lourdes and Fatima. There are also some members who are Muslim. These are mainly refugees from Bosnia and Kosovo. Their numbers are growing visibly.

Women in the Family and Community

Despite the efforts to achieve equal status, the role of women in local environments and families is very often stereotypically determined. Roma communities are traditionally patriarchal, and the position of the woman is still subordinate to the man.

Traditionally, they have a concern for raising children. It requires responsibility and the management of difficult situations - for example, poverty, violence. Of course, we must not forget that many generations often live under the same roof, which may increase the possibility of conflict and violence.



The daughters begin to take over the housework at an early age, while the sons learn from the older men. They expect their mothers and sisters to take care of their primary needs and they require a better quality of life, because of this women often put their own needs last.

Women are often worried, about how to survive, because, they often depend on men. These women are mostly isolated within the Roma communities. So, men and women take this as a destiny to which they have been placed in a cradle and which they cannot resist and change.

The greatest possibility of change we seen relies on educated and employed women. They can break those patterns of behavior.

What is Happening in Middle East? Talking Wisdom and Care @10 – Report

Nora Carmi, WDP Palestine

The conversations were structured to give a brief update about the situation in Palestine/Israel, world awareness, peace building efforts and advocacy.

Update: Showing maps and pointing out the violations of international laws and the extreme measures that Israel is imposing on what is termed as the West Bank and of course Jerusalem:

- Closures and lack of access to education health services and even worship, home demolitions, land confiscation, administrative detention, environmental destruction, attacks against holy places, both Muslim and Christian, and of course target killing, not excluding torture of minors.
- Systematic discrimination in Israel proper against Palestinian citizens that were not Jewish nationals and even among Jews of different backgrounds.



World awareness: Having clarified the strength of the so called: democratic, strong military power that the secular state of Israel today has become, I explained the misunderstanding support of Christian groups around the world that equate the Israelites of the Bible to modern day Israel and feel obliged to support the impunity with which this modern state is dealing with the world and International and humanitarian law.

Peace-building groups and efforts to influence political decision makers to reach a just peace:

1. Intra-religious and interfaith efforts of practical stands together to expose the injustice.
2. Joint activities between Palestinians and Israeli groups that support Human Rights, such as Circle of Bereaved Parents, Combatants for Peace, Taayush (co-living), ICAHD (Israeli Committee against Home Demolition), Mahsom Watch and Human rights organizations in Israel.
3. Two brave groups
 - a. Breaking the Silence - soldiers that dare raise their voices giving testimonies of their inhumane handling of Palestinians in occupied territories such as Hebron are banned by the Israel government.
 - b. Conscientious Objectors - Young Israelis that refuse to serve in the army and hence are jailed.
4. Education programs and awareness building is a very important element and of course global awareness through international groups standing for justice (Kairos Document and others) and the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement

Advocacy: It is an important tool that targets church leaders and parliamentarians to put pressure so that the coming generations in Israel and Palestine can learn to live with dignity and respect of each other.

Community's Responses to Climate Change Talking Wisdom and Care @10 – Report

Fetaiai Pepa Mona and Elizabeth Lanuola Asiata, WDP Salmoa



WDP is a space for leadership formation. The International Meeting gathers the pool of resources we represent and reveals the areas of service we are engaged in as people of faith or professional women. Wisdom and care are theological paths towards justice, and we are exploring this perspective at the International Meeting in several ways.

Small circles are a wonderful space of trust for story sharing and leadership renewal. We want to create space to have dialogue across borders: age, region, denomination, knowledge, skill, etc. The dialogue will build our movement and strengthen our capacity to be present to the communities.

This conversation focuses on sharing the community's responses to climate change starting with the Pacific experience to other parts of the world.



Community Building

Rebeca Gomez Cascante, WDP Costa Rica

Biblical Exercise Activity

Orientation: Use the phrases below to move your body. For example: Move your head as YES or NO, while reciting the Bible verse adapted phrase

- Let your speech be yes or no
- Do not let your right hand know what your left hand is doing
- I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me
- If god is for me, who can be against me?
- The crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain
- Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path
- Forgetting what is behind, I stretch forward toward what is ahead



Breaking down Communication Barriers

Instructions: When you hear the whistle blow, the activity begins. Each time you hear the whistle, it means that you should change to the following activity, but always with the same partner. This will be repeated twice. When the whistle sounds three times it is time to repeat the activity with another person.

- First whistle blow - Look for a woman from another region that you don't know. Share briefly with photos or any other way to communicate something about yourself and/or your family.
- Second whistle blow - Share the symbol of your prayer request that you brought and pray for each other in your own language. Pray softly in order to hear each other as well as respect the others who are also praying. Remember that we have different traditions so that we must be careful, respectful and sensitive to this.
- Third whistle will blow three times - Repeat the activity with a different woman, until you have done it with three different women.
- After praying with the third woman, exchange a small gif

Close the session with the "Hugging Activity". You may use a photograph to illustrate each kind of hug to orient the participants.

- ✓ The bear hug 
- ✓ The sandwich hug 
- ✓ The consoling 

- ✓ The group hug 
- ✓ The waist hug 

Women Leading History: Reformation and World Day of Prayer

(Show business music starts announcing the entrance of role players)

Interviewer: Welcome to the Women to Women Show! I see pretty, colorfully dressed, joyful women. I see you come from all over the world. Let me ask you to stand up if you have traveled more than 15 hours... 20... 25... 30 hours to be here today! (Give a small gift to the ones who traveled the most hours.)

You have traveled a lot, but now I want to introduce you to someone who has travelled much more than all of you together. She has travelled 500 years to come to our show! Her name is Katharina von Bora. Let's give a hand to Katharina.....

(Music plays, welcome greeting)

Interviewer: Nice to meet you, Katharina.

Katharina: Nice to meet you too. Thank you very much for inviting me to come to your show.

Interviewer: Katharina can you tell me something about your childhood.



Katharina: Of course I can. When I was a little child my mother died. I was only 5 years old. My father put me in a convent because he was not able to take care of me. This was very common in my time.

Interviewer: How was your life in the convent, in the cloister?

Katharina: It was not easy for me. One of the most difficult parts for me was that there were many times during the day I was not allowed to talk. I was not allowed to talk at the dining table or at the dorm. Just imagine me without talking?! The rules were very rigid.

Interviewer: So tell me when you met Luther. Was it love at first sight?

Katharina: To be honest, I first felt in love with his ideas. I loved his ideas that even as a woman I would be able to serve the Lord out of the convent.

So, twelve of us started to dream about leaving the convent. We asked our family to take us out, but they refused. So I wrote a letter to Luther asking for help. And he was so gentle to help all of us. He sent a good friend of his, Leonardo, who always delivered food. He helped us escape in barrels of fish. Imagine how we smelled when we came out of the barrels!

Interviewer: What happened to you and your friends after that?

Katharina: Luther arranged marriages for my friends, but I didn't want to marry anyone. I wanted him. I had to wait 8 years. Finally we married and got 6 children.

Interviewer: How was your life then?

Katharina: We lived in a big house, a former monastery. I renovated it. I was responsible for the administration of the house, it became a hostel. We received many theologian students and guests from everywhere, among them were also women who wanted to know more about the ideas of the Reformation movement. We had many conversations with different people around the kitchen table. We talked about God and theology.

Interviewer: We heard about many men who were involved in the Reformation movement like Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Menno Simons, but I don't know any names of women. Were there other women besides you? Has anyone done something important?

Katharina: There was Catherine Zell, Elisabeth Cruciger, Olympia Morata, Marie Dentiere and Argula Von Grumbach. She wrote a manifest against the condemnation of a university teacher because he was supporting the Reformation movement. She was criticized strongly because she was a woman writing this manifest. So she justified her action by citing Joel 2.29 which says: Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

Interviewer: I didn't know there was such a smart lady at that time. Again, what was her name?

Katharina: Argula von Grumbach.

Interviewer: Katharina, what are your impressions of today?

Katharina: Now I see so many women together. I see things have changed. Women are in power.

Interviewer (to the audience): Do you think things have really changed as Katharina thinks? (Ask 3 people to answer)

Interviewer (to Katharina): Thank you very much. Your story was so wonderful.

Let's sing "I will put my Spirit on you," a song based on Joel 2.28 (#12, Meeting Program Book)

Interviewer: We just heard about a woman who inspired us, can one of you tell us about one woman who inspired the World Day of Prayer (WDP) movement?

(Choose a person from the audience, who is prepared to answer)

Lore: One name we should remember is Mary Webb, she was a Baptist from the USA. She had the great idea of connecting with missions abroad. She asked them to send her information about the situations of women there and she took the initiative of praying in a group one night a month for the women and children in the missionary programs. This was already in 1812!!!

Interviewer: She was a great communicator!

Lore: She corresponded in her time with 97 mission societies around the world.



Interviewer: She was a brave woman. Lore and Katharina, can you see any similarities between the Reformation movement and the WDP?

Katharina: The Reformation Movement rediscovered the value of women. Probably, you may have heard about Luther's Five Solas: Sola Scriptura (Scripture alone); Sola Fide (faith alone); Sola Gratia (grace alone); Solus Christus ("Christ alone"); Soli Deo Gloria (only to God, the glory) But have you heard about the biblical concept of the universal priesthood of all believers. In this concept women are included! As I told you, before, women in that time - the 16th century - understood that and lived that out!

Lore: From the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, women discovered again the importance of women studying the Bible and be empowered to transform the unjust reality in a more inclusive and equal society. The WDP lives out solidarity with women through the motto *Informed Prayer. Prayerful Action* for peace and justice.

Interviewer: Thank you, my wonderful guest, and thank you for your contribution, Lore. This will motivate us to continue to work for peace and justice.

I invite you to think about what kind of reformation is needed in our church and society.

What can be your contribution to that transformation?

(Allow 15 minutes for a small group conversation, and let each group write down a sentence to reflect the conversation. Read some of the phrases.)

Interviewer: These are wonderful ways to transform society. Thank you very much and I hope to hear from these actions and we can report on a future show of Women to Women. Good night.

Let's sing together Momento Novo (#15, Meeting Program Book).

Script prepared and played by:
Grytsje Couperus (Brazil)
Christina Winnischofer (Brazil)
Lore Raudonat (Germany)

Closing Worship Reflection

Corinna Harbig, Chairperson 2012-2017

Bible Text: Matthew 28, 16-20
The Commissioning of the Disciples

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Dear sisters,

Reading and listening to these words of the risen Christ, the so called commissioning of the disciples, I can see Ulrike Bechmann lifting up the quotation mark card: *Be careful with this text!*

In the history of Christian churches, these words were often misused to force people to come into Christianity. Misused as an argument to have the right to rule and to govern and oppress other people.

We have learned by listening too many of our World Day of Prayer writer countries that they are still always struggling with the impact colonialism has made on their original tradition, on their original way of life and on their self-consciousness. The feeling as second or third class people is still always there.



When I visited the Philippines, our ecumenical partner sister of the Fellowship of the Least Coin, Corazon Reyes, told me – *Corinna, you have to know that since colonialism we have a deep ground feeling inside that we are women and men who have to serve the others and have no right to complain. So, nowadays many Filipinos are working abroad under very hard and unjust conditions, being underpaid in hospitals or households while cleaning or caring for ageing people.* No! That is not what the text says.

Let us listen to these words as women of faith. What does it mean today to our reality as Christian women?

I would like to highlight three aspects:

1. We as women of faith are called and empowered to follow the footsteps of Jesus.

During this week of "seeking wisdom for God's creation" we learned and assured one another with the Suriname sisters that "All God's creation is good." And we mean all God's creation. We, as women, as God's creation are valued and we are wisdom in the household of God. We, as women, regardless of the color of our skin, our denomination or religion, or if we are young, a mother or grandmother, married or single, lesbian or bisexual, we are valued and we are wisdom. We are God's creation!

The **women** in the gospel were the first one who got the message: Jesus has been raised from the dead.

The **women** were the first one who met the risen Christ and they were the first one who spread the good news. It is not only men's privilege to preach, to lead a Christian community. We as women are valued, and we are wisdom.

We as women of faith are called and empowered to follow the footsteps of Jesus, to spread and teach his commands and he has given us examples of how a community of justice and peace is meant to be - the household of God, a household of wisdom and love.

In our sisterhood of World day of Prayer we have tools of empowerment. One tool is **to share the Bible** from our women's perspective. We experienced it this week when listening and sharing with one another, opening our eyes, minds and hearts to a deeper understanding of the biblical text.

Another tool is **to share our stories**. Listening to one another's stories generates awareness about our sister's joy and sorrow, their opportunities and needs. It increases our sympathy and leads us to accompanying one another.

2. We as women of faith are empowered to pray together.

As the World Day of Prayer movement our prayer is an informed prayer, as it is rooted in listening to God and to one another. It is a powerful prayer as we know it every first Friday in March. It is the prayer of an uncountable number of women all over the world.

It is a **powerful prayer**, as it leads us to conversion like Ulrike Bechmann taught us about the conversion of the one who invites to a feast and nobody came.

It is a powerful prayer because it leads us to change our view, open our eyes towards the world. Our informed prayer leads us to see the destruction of creation, the injustice, the gap between the rich and the poor, the violence, the chaos in God's good creation.

3. We as women of faith, as World Day of Prayer women are empowered to act.

We are empowered to reconstruct communities, empowered to **form new communities, empowered to act together for justice and peace**. This may sound like a heavy goal to reach, but I like the truth in the words of our former executive director Eileen King, who used to say, **World Day of Prayer is a global movement because it is local everywhere**.

We are here gathering as the International Committee because we are all coming from regional and local World Day of Prayer groups. And we will bring back to the women at the regional and local levels of our movement the experience, the information, the spirit we have shared here.

One action we can bring back home could be launching and joining the campaign against Rape and Violence - "Thursdays in Black!"

From here, we are called and empowered, as women of faith, to follow the footsteps of Jesus. We are called to share, pray and act to care for God's creation. We are empowered to share, pray and act for inclusive communities of justice and peace for women, children and men.

In the name of Jesus Christ, who empowers and unites us, amen.

So, how can you use this resource?

- ❖ Share it with the WDP Committee and members widely. It may be also shared with church leaders and ecumenical partners at your local and national context. It is a resource for all!
- ❖ Use it to inspire a follow up locally. You may organize workshops or small group conversations based on the topics or the methodology presented here.
- ❖ Use it towards the preparation for the 2018 WDP Suriname program or throughout the year to follow up on the concerns raised.
- ❖ Use it to prepare your country to participate in the next International Meeting in 2022. See you there!