



## PREFACE

Since October 1997, Helga Hiller and Eileen King have been conducting an in-depth study on the origins of World Day of Prayer and the steps that women took so that World Day of Prayer today is a global, ecumenical movement of informed prayer and action. It was essential to go back to original sources: minutes of meetings, annual reports, letters, books produced for the annual United Study. Their investigation increased the number of women whose identity should be better known. Their study unveiled many more examples of women's cooperation in ecumenical prayer, mission and solidarity in action. They saw records of how women were active agents in the early missionary and ecumenical movements and how much women had accomplished so many years ago. This research revealed that the origins and growth of WDP are complex and require careful study. While the history of WDP takes concentration, it is also inspiring and very rewarding.

For the Cape Town WDPIC Meeting, Helga Hiller and Eileen King prepared dramatic narratives using original texts. They found these texts by digging into the archives of the United Methodist, American Baptist and Presbyterian Churches and from Union Theological Seminary and the Ecumenical Library of The Interchurch Center, home of the WDPIC office. The texts are edited so that WDP Committees can use them. [A computer diskette with the full text is available upon request.]

These narratives were incorporated into an interactive presentation on the history of WDP. The program had four phases and a summary.

### Part 1: Hidden Beginnings Come to Light

- Begins with the familiar story and shows that WDP has even deeper roots.
- Identifies more women who are part of the origins of WDP.
- Demonstrates that women prayed and worked ecumenically in mid 19th Century.

### Part 2: Ecumenical Worldview

A conversation between Helen Barrett Montgomery and Lucy W. Peabody

### Part 3: 1916-1930: A period of Wisdom and Hard Work

WDP became a global ecumenical movement in 1927 through the wisdom and hard work of many women and their faith filled commitment to ecumenical cooperation and solidarity with women and children who were suffering in any part of the world.

**Part 4: Activity: Making a Photo Display of Women Within the WDP Tradition.** Create a display of photographs of women that are placed in a time line of WDP development. [Can be adapted for regional use within a country.]

### Part 5: Summary (Inset)

Overview of this presentation that may be useful in telling the history of WDP to others.

## PART 1: HIDDEN BEGINNINGS COME TO LIGHT

Every first Friday in March women all over the world gather their local communities together. Each of us has prepared for this day for many years. When someone new is introduced to World Day of Prayer they always ask: "When did it begin?" When we tell them



the story of the beginnings of World Day of Prayer, what do we tell them?

At your tables, put down on one piece of paper the things that you always say about the beginning of World Day of Prayer.

After a few minutes invite women to make a common list of the facts that generations of WDP women have been told and passed onto others: for example, 1887 Mary Ellen James, Post Civil War USA, immigrants, etc.

Didn't you always want to know more? What is the fuller story and the context of these beginnings? Today we will introduce more women. We will tell about their contribution to the ecumenical movement that became World Day of Prayer.

**Voice 1** My name is **Mary Webb**. I am a Baptist woman. I belong to the Boston Female Society for Missionary Purposes. In 1812 we published a notice in a Missionary magazine requesting two things: 1. That correspondence from the other societies is sent to me. 2. That everyone should meet for concerted prayer on the first Monday of each month. Although I was in a wheelchair, within two years I was corresponding with 47 societies and by 1818, I was corresponding with 97.

**Narrator 1** Why is she significant? In 1812 Miss Webb had adapted to the women's groups the wide spread practice of the friends of mission who united in a concert of prayer for missions on a given night in each month. This practice of independent joint prayer by women for missions met strong opposition and caused controversy. But the women persisted in combining spiritual and material support for missions through their women's societies.

**Voice 2** (1833) I am a member of the Society for Promoting Female Education in the East. I live in London.

**Voice 3** (1837) I am a member of the Church of Scotland Ladies Association for Foreign Missions.

**Voice 2** Together we raised money in order to send women teachers to China, Malaya, Java, Siam, and India.

**Voice 3** Rev. David Abeel had pleaded with the women of England and Scotland to form these societies because only women could reach women in the countries of the East. The women responded positively.

**Narrator 1** (1834) When Rev. Abeel returned to America, his home country, he made the same appeal, and women under the leadership of Sarah Doremus in New York were ready to organize. But the head of the largest general mission board in America opposed sending single women abroad. At his insistence, the women deferred organizing for foreign mission indefinitely and turned their energy to the needs of women and children in local communities.

**Voice 4** (1861) My name is **Sarah Doremus**. Since the first appeal of Rev. Abeel I have longed for women to reach women in other lands. In 1861 I could not refuse the plea of a wife of a Baptist missionary to Burma. She sought for the appointment of a large number of single women to be sent as teachers for the Burma missions. So we founded the interdenominational Woman's Union Missionary Society of America.



**Voice 5** (1888) My name is **Abbie Child**. I am the secretary of the Congregational Woman's Board of Missions in Boston. At the Centenary Conference on Protestant Missions of the World, almost 400 women from Great Britain, Ireland, USA and Canada were present. For the first time there were special sessions on Women's Mission to Women and I was privileged to give one of the speeches. At the end of the conference we women came together to establish the World's Missionary Committee of Christian Woman, which from now on should form a means of communication between our societies in the whole world. As a World Committee, we are keen to unite our efforts for special prayer and for other purposes. For example, the legal relief of the twenty million widows in India. I was elected to be the Chairman. We have now decided to keep the hour from 5 to 6 p.m. on every Lord's day as a time of special prayer. Women in Australia and Africa are joining the women of America and Europe in this time of personal prayer.

**Narrator 2:** It is significant to see that, from very early on, the women in the missionary movement had a world perspective. Their global vision always kept deepening and widening. Very soon they became keen supporters of the beginning ecumenical movement. One must also say that their significant contributions to the ecumenical movement were never taken up in the standard books on church history.

**Voice 6** (1887) My name is **Mary Ellen James**. I am the President of the Presbyterian Woman's Executive Committee for Home Mission. In 1887, our Executive Committee called on the women of the Presbyterian Church to observe each year a Week of Prayer and Humiliation. One day of this week was set aside when



Mary Ellen James and her children.

a special service is held in which there shall be confession of individual and national sins with offerings that will fitly express the contrition. It is from such offerings and the personal gifts of the women that we depend to continue the schoolwork of our society in the new territories of the USA and can do missionary work with women and children there. To collect the considerable sums of money that we need the women often deny themselves of daily needs or special wishes and give their gifts from what they have saved.

**Narrator 1:** At about the same time, women of other denominations in the United States started similar days and weeks of prayer for home and foreign missions. In Canada, Anglican women began to observe a Day of Prayer for missions in 1895. The seed for the future World Day of Prayer was laid, however, by a few Methodist women in North Western Iowa who, from a small, rural and often remote area, developed a vision of united prayer.

**Voice 7** I am **Mrs. Negus** from Iowa and I belong to our Methodist Episcopal Woman's Missionary Society. A few of us had started to observe a Day of Humiliation and Prayer in 1892. A year later we convinced our whole society in the United States to engage in such an annual day. We then wrote to our Presbyterian sisters to learn about their experiences with their Day of Prayer and asked for their "Exercises". They wrote back. "We think a general call from home missionary organizations of all denominations for a special day when all our women could unite in fervent prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon our work, would be good for us all. Your letter suggests the thought that something of the kind might be arranged." So we contacted the women of other denominations, and something very exciting happened: they all happily agreed to join in the Day. By 1897, the women of seven denominations had formed a joint committee for a United Day of Prayer for Home Missions. Each year, the women of another denomination assumes the responsibility of writing the Day of Prayer program for all of us. Through this new venture in cooperation we pulled together much more closely in our work and, in 1908, founded the Council of Women for Home Missions that took responsibility for joint work with immigrants and other social issues.

**Narrator 2** From the beginnings, there was a world perspective, not just an American home view. The women who made the connections at the grass roots level are often overlooked in telling the story.

## PART 2: ECUMENICAL WORLDVIEW A Conversation between Helen B. Montgomery & Lucy W. Peabody

**HBM** I am **Helen Barrett Montgomery** and this is my friend **Lucy Peabody**. We are both Baptists. When we met for the first time in 1887, we both were 26 years old. Lucy had just come back from India where she had worked as a missionary with her husband for six years. But her husband died, and so she had to return to America with her two little children and had to make her living as Home Secretary of the Woman's Baptist Foreign Missionary Society.



Helen B. Montgomery

**LWP** Helen and I were very enthusiastic about what women could do through foreign missions for their sisters in other countries by bringing them the liberating message of the gospel. We put all our energy in mobilizing the women at home to get thoroughly informed about missions and to support many types of woman's work for women and children such as evangelistic, educational, medical and social work.



Lucy Peabody

**HBM** The two of us always made a real good team. We both have learned to speak in public and to lose stage fright even in front of large crowds. Lucy is the organizer. The women call her "our prophet", because she always has ideas and new visions for the future.

**LWP** Helen brings in another outstanding gift. She is a brilliant writer. We started the Central Committee on the United Study of Foreign Missions on the initiative of the World's Missionary Committee in 1900 and since I became the Chairperson a year later, many thousands of American women have engaged in mission study in local ecumenical groups or at exciting summer conferences. After Helen had written her first book on the Island World of the Pacific in 1906, she became the favorite author of annual mission study books. Her book "Western Women in Eastern Lands" appeared last year, in 1910. It tells the history of 50 years of the Women's Missionary Movement and also offers an in-depth analysis of it. The book sold 50,000 copies in only 6 weeks.

**HBM** But don't forget, Lucy, the most congenial idea came from you. We have just now come back from the incredible experience of the Woman's Missionary Jubilee, which - as a Baptist magazine wrote - has been sweeping across the country from the Pacific to the Atlantic since last October 1910. It is true that we together with other women speakers have absolutely worked night and day to speak at 70 two-day events with mostly thousands of women and in hundreds of smaller towns. Never before has there been such a powerful experience of what women have achieved in ecumenical cooperation, in prayer and information sharing and in collecting funds to help their sisters in other countries. What matters is the spiritual power, not the figures. But as you always say, Lucy, the figures of what women have put together by personal sacrifice shows their love for missions. Since 1861, they collected 40 million dollars. During the Jubilee celebrations, \$1,030,000 were given most of which will go to Christian Women's Colleges in Asia in order to help women of the Orient to become doctors, nurses, teachers and missionary leaders in their own country and for their own women.

**LWP** But as our motto for the Jubilee says, Helen: "The End of the Jubilee is the Beginning of the Campaign." During the Jubilee, many women from local societies have experienced the inspiration and strength that comes from uniting with women from other denominations. In many places, they have now formed interdenominational women's groups. They will join their efforts in working for many causes. But they will also need to renew their spiritual strength to carry one another's burden. So let us call for an interdenominational Day of Prayer for Foreign Missions when the 44 Woman's Boards of Foreign Missions of the USA and Canada will meet next year in 1912 for their Triennial Conference.



Helen Barrett Montgomery on tour in 1914.

### **PART 3: 1916 - 1930**

#### **A Period of Wisdom and Hard Work**

From a world torn by war to a World Day of Prayer binding the women of the world together in mutual partnership

**Narrator 1** For the third period, the years from World War I until 1930, we provided you with several pages of important quotes and some of the contexts in which they were spoken or written.

**Narrator 2** We will highlight a few points that reveal the tremendous development that took place in the transition from interdenominational Days of Prayer to a United Day of Prayer and then to a World Day of Prayer. All of this was accomplished seemingly in a few years. These texts with identifying sources show how women were effective organizers with a world vision.



#### **1916 Mission Study Book by Caroline Atwater Mason: World Missions and World Peace**

The first quote is from a mission study book that appeared in the middle of World War I and was consequently studied by tens of thousands of women. The question that troubled many Christians in the USA as well as in other countries is, "Does the biggest war in history with its contempt of human life and its unheard of brutality and devastation mean that Christianity has broken down? Didn't it become pointless, they asked, to send missionaries and to bring the message of peace and goodwill to the world if Christianity itself contradicts its message by its very deeds?" Caroline Atwater-Mason says: *Missions and peace are inseparable, and the very fact of this terrible war should call all Christians back to the message of the Prince of Peace, to the message of Jesus Christ.* She calls on the women in the local groups for a new commitment: *As never before Christians must work for peace for the sake of missions; as never before they must work for missions for the sake of peace. That every local church be made both a peace society and a missionary society should be our immediate aim.*

When the war was over, Christian women in North America took this commitment serious and worked for peace in many ways. "God's compassion opens us to feel one another's pain and to take up what is broken"

### *The crisis of world war*

*But at this hour we are facing a crisis unprecedented in the history of the Christian Church, for today the greatest war of all history is being waged with a disregard for human life and a ferocity unparalleled in the annals of war; nations seem to have returned to primitive barbarism, nations which for centuries have known the religion of the Prince of Peace....*

*Yes, the present war is calling all the races of earth together and uniting them in a common fellowship, the fellowship of hatred. This calls for a mighty strengthening of the fellowship of love. But there is no room for despair in the councils of the Kingdom, for faltering or failing. As never before Christians must work for peace for the sake of missions. As never before they must work for missions for the sake of peace. That every local church be made both a peace society and a missionary society should be our immediate aim.*



### **1920 United**

#### **Challenged to join in prayer and working for world peace through the disturbing experiences of a World War**

The experiences of the World War also challenged the women in the USA and Canada to a new commitment to work together. So they combined their separate Days of Prayer in 1920 to United Days of Prayer. The women of the United States chose the first Friday in Lent as their date and the Canadian women joined them two years later. **Together** became a keyword for them and they discovered anew: God's love binds us together.

*TOGETHER IS the keyword of the present area. An international mind and interdenominational vision have come into being. For many years, missionary societies have been observing, interdenominationally, a Day of Prayer for Foreign Missions and a Day of Prayer for Home Missions. Now, at last, together the thanksgiving, petition and intercession for home and foreign missions will arise. The first Friday in Lent has been chosen by the Federation of Woman's Boards of Foreign Missions and the Council of Women for Home Missions for the annual observance of this united Day of Prayer.*

*The theme for February 20, 1920: The World to Christ We Bring.*

The Missionary Review of the World, January 1920, p. 61



### **1924 Vision of a World Fellowship of Christian Women**

In the years after the war Helen Barrett Montgomery and Lucy W. Peabody once more offer inspiration and leadership to the women united in ecumenical cooperation. In 1921 Helen Montgomery is the first woman to become President of a large church body, the Northern Baptist Convention. Three years later she offers the first translation of the New Testament from Greek into English done by a woman, and in 1926 she writes the worship service for the Day of Prayer. She never forgets that in all of this she represents the women of the churches.

Lucy W. Peabody brings in a vision of a World Fellowship of Christian Women. She understands it as a sisterhood around the world in which all are partners and equals and the western women pass on their former leadership position to all the women of the world. World Friendship becomes an important concept, as another

woman and missionary writer states: "The people who have a distinct talent for friendship are the ones who are valuable now."

Lucy W. Peabody's vision became a strong impulse for making visible the commitment to pray together and for creating a World Day of Prayer. "God's truth inspires us to see."

*Mrs. Peabody, who, for forty years has been a leader of women's missionary effort, and is called "the beloved prophet and seer of the Federation", brought to this meeting her vision of the climax of its activities - the proposal for a federation of the Christian women of the world. "There is nothing so powerful in this world as a great ideal whose time to be born has come." Many thousands of Christian women are to be found ready to be herded together.. Most impressive were the messages spoken in support of this great ideal as given by leading Christian women of the Orient.... to get together and work out some basis for lasting peace. To such a cause, a Christian sisterhood of the world can make a worthy contribution by uniting in the vital things and the things that are being sought today by Christian women.*

The Missionary Review of the World, February 1924, p.140



### **January 1927 The Message of the Retiring President, Mrs. E.H. Silverthorn "Sharing the Gospel Message through Missions touches all of life"**

From the Annual Reports of the Federation of Woman's Boards of Foreign Missions 1927 - 1930:

In their support for missionary work, the women saw clearer and clearer that the Message of the Gospel is not only aimed at inner, personal realities, but also the reality around us. As Katherine Silverthorn says: "The Gospel Message touches all of life and its relationships. Godward and Manward. [It] implies... such relations as racial, international, economic, industrial and social relations." The women in the missionary societies were especially concerned about the exploitation of women and children in the new industries in many countries as well as about the racism in the immigration laws of the United States that affected people from Asia. They felt their commitment to act together because "God's justice requires us to act".

*We are finding it increasingly difficult in this age of complex relationships to narrow our missionary activities and interests to what we used to designate as "Missions per se". If "Mission" implies sharing the Gospel Message, Good News, the abundant life Christ came to give to all, then our message touches all of life, and its relationships. Godward and Manward. This latter implies a very wide-spread interest; such relations as racial, international, economic, industrial and social come under its purview.*

*That young church in the Orient, Africa, Latin America, must have help to meet many uncharted situations as they arise in its growing, expanding life. Where do they look for that help?..Timothy Lew says, "If the church rules these problems outside her province, it is difficult to believe that the Chinese, practical people that they are," will be attracted by the Christian message."*

*I feel strongly that it is our duty to educate our constituency as to what should be our Christian and Missionary attitudes regarding international relations, international policies, the Christian attitude toward industry and peace. This is one of the things we have been attempting to do in our Missionary Education.*

### About Women's State and Local Church Groups

*These days call for a prophetic vision, a clear perspective. There are so many problems pressing for quick solution, that it is not always possible to get the "long view".*

*May not one of the functions of the Federation be this very thing, that together we may come to view with clear eyes the "wholeness" the inclusiveness of the missionary enterprise, and that the outcome may be an enlarged conception of the scope and purpose of missions, and of the application of Christian principles to all of life?*



#### **1927 Making the Day of Prayer worldwide meets enthusiastic response**

In the second half of 1926 the women of North America distributed the Day of Prayer service to as many countries and partners in mission as they could and invited them to pray together on March 4, 1927. By January 1927 this invitation had met such an enthusiastic response from women all over the world that the Committee which was responsible for the Day of Prayer could state with anticipation and great joy: "Our Day of Prayer will now be a World Day of Prayer." World Day of Prayer is a commitment to pray together, because God's presence inspires us to pray,

*An invitation sent to participate in the annual observance of the Day of Prayer, met with an enthusiastic response, and as a result we have sent out the first Call to a World Day of Prayer, March 4, 1927.*

*Enthusiastic reports and orders have come to us from many of our foreign fields, together with keen appreciation that it is now to be a World Day of Prayer.*



#### **January 1928 The circle of prayer expands — Title shortened to "World Day of Prayer"**

For the years 1928 and 1929 the quotes come from the reports of the World Day of Prayer Committee at the Annual Meetings of the Federation of Woman's Boards of Foreign Missions of North America.

January 1928:

*It is with deep gratitude that we recognize the growing power inherent in our World Day of Prayer. A very decided expansion of this prayer fellowship has come during the past year. The circle of prayer has expanded literally around the world. We have learned the great lesson of praying with, rather than for, our sisters of other races and nations, thus enriching our experience and releasing the power which must be ours if we are to accomplish tasks entrusted to us.*

*We, therefore, recommend:*

*That during the coming year, we continue to develop our plans for this world-wide fellowship of prayer endeavoring to draw into its circle those who are as yet have not fully joined in the effort.*

*This conference may mark the beginning of a new era in women's work if the great body of women, who have given so loyally of their time and thought and money to mission work in the past, will act upon the findings of this meeting in a spirit of daring confidence in the leading of the Living God.*

*Christian women and girls of many races and languages living in many lands, united on March 4, 1927 in a great fellowship of inter-*

*cession which encircled the world.*

*It has been thrilling to read the many unsolicited letters which have come from India, Burma, China, Korea, Japan, South America, Africa, Syria, Europe, the Islands, Canada, and all parts of United States, telling of the helpfulness of the day, and expressing great joy that it has been made world inclusive.*

*Wherever an opportunity is afforded, women seem eager and hungry for a share in this prayer fellowship. New contacts were made during the past year and a wider observance is promised for February 24, 1928.*

*The committee voted to shorten the title of the Day by omitting the phrase "for missions" simply using the title "The World Day of Prayer."*

January 1929:

*The rapidly growing power and influence of the World Day of Prayer as it is being observed by an ever widening circle of Christian women throughout the world, deepens the conviction of the committee that we have as yet touched but the fringe of the possibilities wrapped up in this movement. Testimonies from hundreds of communities in the United States and from many other countries are full of expressions of gratitude of what the day is meaning to Christian women in the new discoveries of God and spiritual power; in breaking down denominational and interracial barriers and bringing the women together into a beautiful and helpful fellowship. A letter from one of our southern states expresses what many others have said, namely: "Such programs as 'Breaking Down Barriers' are helping us a great deal to a better interracial understanding and to break down the barriers which hinder our fellowship in Christ." To women who have limited knowledge of other races and nations, the day has awakened consciousness of a great world of need beyond their own borders and of themselves as a part of a great world sisterhood. "It thrills us all through and through to think of the great chain of prayers encircling the globe," writes a woman of Korea. With each observance of the Day of Prayer there has come, to the committee, an ever-enlarging horizon and vision of still larger things to be accomplished.*



#### **January 1930 Planning for an international World Day of Prayer Committee**


One of the most surprising discoveries which we made is that in 1930, three years after the beginning of World Day of Prayer the women already had a plan for an International World Day of Prayer Committee. They also made the Day truly worldwide by asking a woman from Korea, Helen Kim, to write the worship service. So as early as 1930 the basic concept and the important dimensions of World Day of Prayer have already been shaped.

*You will recognize that since the expansion of the Day of Prayer into a world observance this committee has necessarily had to serve in a dual capacity. In the first place, we are charged with responsibility to think and plan as though we were a world committee in personnel, representing all countries and bringing into our thinking the viewpoint of all. On the other hand, we also were the promotional committee for North America. Our first function should as early as possible pass into the hands of a committee composed of outstanding Christian women from many countries, not necessarily heading up its leadership in North America. As a Council and Federation we would then continue our Joint Commit-*

tee, to cooperate with the World Committee in relating the program and plans to Canada and the United States. As a step in this direction it was voted to invite the women members of the International Missionary Council to serve on the Committee as a consulting group.

There has been a constant widening of the world circle of our prayer fellowship. Word has reached us directly or indirectly that the day is being observed in thirty-three countries:

Japan	Africa	Alaska
Korea	Holland	United States
China	Poland	Mexico
Philippine Islands	Hungary	Puerto Rico
Siam	Switzerland	Brazil
Burma	Germany	British Guyana
India	Austria	Argentina
New Zealand	France	Chile
Australia	England	Hawaii
Persia	Scotland	Canada
Turkey	Nova Scotia	Syria

 **1930 Making the service international – Helen Kim from Korea the first international writer on the theme “That Jesus may be lifted up”**

In trying to fulfill our stewardship as a world committee we present to you, for the observance on March 7, 1930, the material which has been prepared by young women of three nationalities: Miss **Helen Kim** of Korea is responsible largely for the program entitled “That Jesus May be Lifted Up”; Miss Esperanza Abellera of the Philippine Islands gives us the “Call to Prayer”; and Miss Jean Paxton of the United States prepared the special service of Consecration, entitled “Looking Unto Jesus”.

For 1931 the program is being prepared by Miss Kathleen MacArthur of Toronto, Canada, a former missionary to Japan.



Helen Kim from Korea was the first international wrtier.

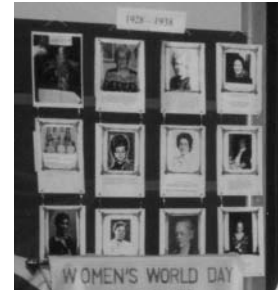
**PART 4: ACTIVITY**

**Making a Photo Display of Women Within the WDP Tradition**

[This activity can be adapted for identifying origins of local WDP committees]

The history of World Day of Prayer is a global story. Every WDP Committee has a history that is important and knowing one another’s history of WDP can benefit us all. You did research on the history of WDP in your country and you identified a woman who was:

- the first woman or among the first women of your own country to take responsibility for WDP being observed widely in many places
- or the first woman or among the first women of your own country to promote the ecumenical dimension of World Day of Prayer
- or the first woman or among the first women of your own country to make a very valuable contribution to the promotion of WDP in your country.



You found a photograph of her and placed it in the frame outlined on the paper. Below the picture you printed her name, the name of her country and one sentence about her contribution to WDP in your country. On the back of the paper you could attach a fuller description about her contribution. You also looked into the history of WDP in your country. At this time take a turn telling the women at your table who this woman is and what she has done for WDP in your country.

A favorite quote of the women in the missionary movement comes from Psalm 68 — *The women that publish the tidings are a great host.* Together in this space we will see that quote come to life. Keep in mind the year that WDP started in your country. Stand when you hear that time period and hold your photo up, even if the women you selected belongs to a later time.

We will begin first with women of United States and Canada. Then we will move from 1927 forward calling out outstanding years until today.

In 1938 the theme was “The Church, A World Fellowship”, by Alice E. Henderson, New Zealand. In that year plans were made for the founding of a World Council of Churches. **Countries that started from 1927 until 1938**, stand up, announce your WDP Committee and hold up the picture you brought.

In 1947 the world was torn apart after the destruction of World War II.. Isabel Caleb from India writes a World Day of Prayer service on “Make Level in the Desert a Highway for our God”. **Countries that began from 1939 until 1947** please stand and announce your WDP Committee and hold up the picture you brought.

**In 1961** there were Prayer Fellowships on the occasion of the 75th Anniversary of World Day of Prayer: 37 Prayer-Fellowships were held on 5 continents bringing together 2000 women from over 80 countries, 29 Prayer Fellowships were held in the USA, 3 in Canada, 5 on other continents.

These Prayer Fellowships mark a new beginning of making the organization of World Day of Prayer worldwide. The World Day of Prayer theme was Forward Through the Ages. The Author was Sue Weddell from the USA. Countries that began between 1948 and

1961 please stand, announce the name of your country and hold up the photo of your woman

**In 1968** an important event took place: the founding of World Day of Prayer International Committee in Vallingby, Sweden. **Anybody here, who attended that meeting, please stand. [Brigalia Bam stood up.]**

In 1968 Rathie Selvaratnam from Sri Lanka, the chairperson of the provisional Executive Committee wrote the service on the theme Bear Ye One Another's Burdens. **In 1969** — The World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations postponed its own WUCWO-Day from March to May and recommended warmly to all Roman-Catholic women to participate actively in World Day of Prayer. Roman-Catholic women in many countries make World Day of Prayer more ecumenical and bring their gifts to it. **Countries that began between 1962 and 1969 please stand and hold the photo of your woman.**

In 1974 the third World Day of Prayer International Committee meeting took place in Guernavaca, Mexico. The theme of the year 1974 was Make Us Builders of Peace, written by WDP Women of Japan. **Countries that began between 1970 and 1974 please stand and hold the photo of your woman.**

**1978** The fourth WDP International Committee meeting took place in Zambia.

**1981** "The Earth Is the Lord's" prepared by Native American Women, USA

**1987** Come and Rejoice (Centennial Anniversary) was written by the WDPIC Executive Committee.

**Countries that began between 1975 and 1987 please stand and hold the photo of your woman.**

1994 "Go, See and Act" WDP Women of Palestine

**Countries that began between 1988 and 1994 please stand and hold the photo of your woman**

**1999** "God's Tender Touch" WDP Women of Venezuela

**Which is the youngest World Day of Prayer-Committees present in this room? Please stand and hold the photo of your woman. [Croatia was the youngest World Day of Prayer Committee in attendance at the meeting.]**

*Narrator 1* We are here in Cape Town for the 9th international meeting. The history of WDP both inspires us and calls us to accountability for this movement. The women of WDP were serious. They were women who were well informed; they worked very hard. They strove to work and pray — together. They also kept careful records of their activities. Their records show that they held themselves to a high standard of accountability.

Be inspired to do research in your own country. Go to original sources. Find the minutes of women's meetings. Let the women tell you who they are what they did. See if there are contradictions or simplifications. See if one side of the story is told and another is omitted. There is a lot of research that still needs to be done. But it will be worth all your efforts.

From these original sources we found women who were carrying on very good work and who were also able to make important personal sacrifices in order for ever widening ecumenical movement of prayer and action. May we be mindful of their courage, their faith, their love and their commitment to live out the Gospel message. These women are cherished sisters to all of us in the past and now.

**PART 5: SUMMARY (Inset)**

See following inset for an outline of a more comprehensive description of the history, development, and vision of World Day of Prayer.



*Brigalia Bam in the upper right was part of the first WDPIC International Meeting held in 1968 in Sweden.*



*WDP Worship Service in Indonesia, 1972. The service for 2000, "Talitha Kumi, Young Woman Stand Up" was written by WDP Committee of Indonesia.*

THE HELPING HAND	
JANUARY, 1900.	
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## ORIGINS OF WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

The origins of World Day of Prayer date back to the 19th century when Christian women of United States and Canada initiated a variety of cooperative activities in support of women's involvement in mission at home and in other parts of the world. These activities related to the following areas:

### » Concern for women and children

Women had a strong sense of identification with the needs of women and children and searched out ways to provide appropriate support. In spite of strong resistance from all - male mission boards, in 1861 and the following years women founded numerous and effective women's boards for foreign and home missions whereby they could work directly with and for women and children.

### » The role of prayer in mission work.

Women were encouraged to engage in personal prayer and take leadership in communal prayer within their mission auxiliaries and associations. This emphasis on prayer led to annual days and weeks of prayer. In 1887 Presbyterian women called for a Day of Prayer for Home Missions and Methodist women called for a week of prayer and self-denial for foreign missions. A Baptist Day of Prayer for foreign missions began in 1891..

### » Vision of Christian unity.

Women had a vision of Christian unity that was seen as essential to their exercise of mission. Methodist women joined the day of prayer for home missions between 1892 and 1894. By 1897 the women of 6 denominations formed a joint committee for a united day of prayer for home missions. On a rotation system women of the participating denominations wrote the common worship service. In 1912 the Woman's Boards of Foreign Missions called for a united day of prayer for foreign missions.

### » Study was everyone's responsibility.

Following the Ecumenical Missionary Conference in New York City in 1900, women organized an interdenominational Central Committee for United Study that prepared publications, summer conferences, study days and courses so that women could become informed about the lives of women in other parts of the world and could study biblical foundations and vital issues related to mission work.

### » Organizing interdenominational structures.

Women undertook organizing interdenominational structures that were effective and cooperative in home and foreign missions. For example, in 1908 the women founded the Council of Women for Home Missions that took responsibility for joint work with immigrants and other social issues and for preparation of the joint day of prayer.

### » Women celebrated their commitment.

In 1911 women celebrated the 50th Anniversary or Jubilee of women's missionary activity by organizing a series of speaking engagements across the United States that provided women with a powerful experience of what they had achieved in ecumenical cooperation and fellowship, in local and global linkage, in prayer and information sharing, and in biblical reflection. All of this had been in the hands of women. Out of this experience many local interdenominational women's groups were formed.

### » Women linked world peace with world mission.

After the devastation of World War I, women incorporated the conviction that world peace was intrinsically tied to world mission. With this realization women renewed their efforts for unity. The first Friday of Lent was established as a joint day of prayer for missions and was celebrated for the first time on February 20, 1920. Due to the enthusiastic facilitation of local denominational and interdenominational women's groups, the day of prayer spread rapidly throughout the USA. In 1922, the Canadian women, who had begun celebrating a day of prayer in 1895, took up the same date.

### » World Day of Prayer comes into being.

In the second half of 1926 the women of North America distributed the worship service to as many countries and partners in mission as they could. The response worldwide was enthusiastic. By the beginning of 1927 the call to prayer that was issued was for a World Day of Prayer for Missions.

In 1928, the title of the day was shortened to "The World Day of Prayer". In the same year, this statement came from the World Day of Prayer Committee:

*It is with deep gratitude that we recognize the growing power inherent in our World Day of Prayer. A very decided expansion of this prayer fellowship has come during the past year. The circle of prayer has expanded literally around the world. We have learned the great lesson of praying with, rather than for, our sisters of other races and nations, thus enriching our experience and releasing the power which must be ours if we are to accomplish tasks entrusted to us.*

Hereafter the day is named — World Day of Prayer.

In 1930, Helen Kim of Korea is the first woman outside of the United States to write the order of worship for the World Day of Prayer. It is from these roots that World Day of Prayer has taken its present shape.