

**World Day of Prayer is a global ecumenical movement led by Christian women  
who welcome you to join in prayer and action for peace and justice.**

World Day of Prayer is celebrated on the first Friday of March each year to encourage Christian women to engage in personal prayer and lead communal prayer within their mission auxiliaries and associations. Women have a strong sense of identification with the needs of other women and children and are better suited to provide the appropriate support. Since 1861, despite strong resistance from the all-male mission boards, women have established a number of effective boards for foreign and home missions working directly with and for women and children. World Day of Prayer is an initiative of one such board, which aims to make the lives of women and children easier by offering resources and support.

In the 19th century, Christian women of the U.S. and Canada began engaging in cooperative activities to support women's involvement in missions across the world. In 1887, Presbyterian women called for a day of prayer for home missions which the Methodist women joined from 1892 to 1894 after calling for a week of prayer. The Baptist started a day of prayer for foreign missions in 1891.

Forming a committee in 1897, women from six denominations would eventually start a united day of prayer for home missions. These women took turns in the other participating denominations and organized the common worship service. In 1912, the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions decided that there should be a united day of prayer for foreign missions that would be observed in different parts of the world.

After the success of the Ecumenical Missionary Conference in New York City in 1900, a group of laywomen organized an interdenominational Central Committee for United Study that prepared publications, summer conferences, study days, and courses so that women could be up-to-date about the lives of women in other parts of the world. These courses also enabled them to study biblical foundations and important issues related to mission work. Women took initiatives to organize interdenominational structures that were effective and cooperative in home and foreign missions. In 1908, the women founded the Council of Women for Home Missions that assumed responsibility for the rehabilitation of immigrants and other social issues, and for the preparation of the joint day of prayer.

World Day of Prayer affirms our belief and faith in Christ and humanity. It's a day to remind us that good things happen when people come together for a cause.

The 2026 World Day of Prayer materials from Nigeria bring us a powerful invitation drawn from Matthew 11:28-30. At a time when people worldwide are carrying heavy burdens, our Nigerian sisters offer profound insights into finding rest in God.

Through their exploration of different kinds of burdens - shame, systemic oppression, religious persecution, poverty and despair - the writers help us understand both the weight of human suffering and the depths of divine rest. Their work shows us that true rest isn't just about physical relief, but about transformation through God's grace and community support.

You'll find this theme beautifully expressed across all program components. The Worship Service features a playlet about a young girl named Chioma and stories of three Nigerian women: Beatrice, Jato, and Blessing. Their experiences reveal how God provides rest through community support, faith, and hope. Original music composed for the program includes a moving theme song by Chisom R. Chukwumerije, written especially for this World Day of Prayer service. The song invites those who are weary and oppressed to find comfort and rest in God. The artistic work of Gift Amarachi Ottah beautifully captures the theme through her depiction of burdens carried by women from diverse backgrounds.

The Bible Study explores divine rest from creation to Jesus' time, examining wisdom traditions and Jesus' transformation of rest from rigid rules to liberating mercy. The Children's Program includes prayers, storytelling, and other activities that help children understand how they can both receive and extend God's rest to others. Through interactive elements, children learn about Nigeria's rich culture while exploring what it means to bring their burdens to God and help others who are weary.

The World Day of Prayer program is inspired by its motto ***Informed Prayer and Prayerful Action***. Through informed prayer we seek out ways to act in solidarity with women and communities in need. When we prepare and celebrate World Day of Prayer, we do this as a community.

*We pray and worship in community,  
We continue our relationship in prayer and service throughout the year,  
We work together as women of various races/ethnicities, cultures and traditions,  
We become aware of the worldwide community of people,  
We become enriched by the faith experience of other Christians,  
We become aware of the burdens many people have to carry,  
We are challenged to use our gifts and talents and use them in the service of society.*

Every year, when a local community engages globally in ***Informed Prayer and Prayerful Action***, the world shifts; and we hope it does towards justice and peace.