



# World Day of Prayer

Prepared by the WDP Committee of Palestine

March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024

**“I Beg You... Bear With One Another in Love.”**



## Bible Study

**Ephesians 4: 1-3**

Prepared by the WDP Committee of Palestine

## **Preparatory Notes:**

Organise the Bible Study prior to the Worship Service so that it can reflect the theme in connection with an understanding of the Palestinian Christian context.

Ask participants to bring their own pictures or to take pictures from magazines/newspapers showing what women are doing in their own context around the world. Give them a chance to discuss.

Conclude the Bible Study with making a collage of the pictures.

## **Introductory Notes**

Ephesians is considered to be written by Paul when he was imprisoned in Rome around 60-61 CE. He wrote this epistle to strengthen the community's faith in Christ, in the grace of God and the Gospel. He also wrote to encourage them to continue their work of living in holiness and service in response to God's saving grace. Ephesians therefore carries themes of exhortation and assurance.

The first three chapters of Ephesians discuss God's salvation and the gift of unity, while the last three chapters describe the response of believers to God's plan of salvation. This year's World Day of Prayer programme comes from the first three verses of Chapter Four. In these verses, Paul encourages the Ephesians to live a sanctified life, bearing with one another in humility and love in order to maintain the gift of unity that God had given them. Paul reminds the Ephesians that God chose both Gentiles and Jews to be saved, bringing together people of very different backgrounds through the shared promise guaranteed by Christ to all members of his church. Paul urges Ephesians to live a life worthy of the calling they received, as people united with one another through Christ's saving work.

This calling is not easy. It requires patience, self-denial, and love. Paul reminds Ephesians to be united in one spirit by the hope they share in Christ. And so, we Christians, spread throughout the world, can find out unity and hope in this text.

## Opening Exercise

Before reading the text, invite participants to stand or sit in a circle, joining hands by placing palms together, with the left hand facing palm downwards, and the right facing palm upwards, so each participant lifts up the hand of the person on their right and is lifted up by the person on their left.

Ask participants to reflect on how this exercise feels, and what it suggests to them about the nature of community.



## Scripture Reading

Read Ephesians 4: 1-3

### NRSV

*"I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."*

### New Jerusalem Bible

*"I, the prisoner in the Lord, urge you therefore to lead a life worthy of the vocation to which you were called. With all humility and gentleness, and with patience, support each other in love. Take every care to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together."*

Consider reading the same text in different versions, as well as in other languages familiar to the group. After reading the text consider the following questions:

Why does Paul "beg" the Ephesians rather than command them?  
What does this tell us - that we as Christians are called to resolve conflicts with each other?

What does it mean to "bear with" someone? What are examples of this?

Why is community important for Christians, and for the world in which we live?

## **Reflection on the Theme**

In Paul's address to the Ephesians, he begs the community to bear with one another. The word "beg" is a strong word. It can be translated from the Greek as "implore", "urge", or "request". This word tells us something about Paul and his relationship to the Ephesians. Despite being an authority figure for the Ephesian church, Paul does not order or command the Ephesians. He begs them, treating them as the higher and more powerful party in the relationship. This is a gesture of great respect and humility. It suggests that Paul loves this community greatly, and that what he is asking is more important than pride and protocol.

And what is Paul asking? He is asking the Ephesians to live a life worthy of their calling. To be worthy of their calling, the Ephesians must live with humility, and gentleness and patience. To be worthy of their calling, The Ephesians must bear together in love.

Living under occupation, Palestinians know how hard it is to bear together in love. Occupation attempts to divide Palestinians from each other, Muslims, Christians, and Jews. When some Palestinians are given privileges that other Palestinians are denied, it divides the community. When some have more freedom of movement than others, it divides the community. When some Palestinian faith leaders are treated better than others, it divides the community. Although bearing together in love under occupation is a challenge, Palestinians are determined to remain a community.

### **What is a community?**

Jesus' answer to this was simple, in a situation when Palestine was occupied by the Romans: turn the other cheek, walk an extra mile, those who live by the sword will perish by the sword.

The way of the spirit is to endure, to turn away from the world of Adam and allow the rule of Christ in us. The way of love is tolerance and deeper understanding. While we may not agree with the Other, and may

condemn unjust practices, we are called to work towards the Kingdom where all are equal in the sight of God, and held in love in the heart of God, even our enemies. So, what is our way forward when the burden is so great? First, we recognise injustice and speak out. We draw attention to our plight which Paul asks us to bear in love. This is such a huge task he cannot order it.

But we never forget that the Other is also struggling in Adam's world.

We need to find those points of healing where change is possible. Love will always help us if we open our hearts to the Other and to each other. Whilst we hold our Palestinian sisters in our hearts, may we also be open to the lessons they can teach us.

Our children are not arrested when simply walking to school?

It is a long time since we as children were beaten for not speaking 'proper' English.

Military checkpoints are not part of our daily experience.

How can we empathise with the Palestinian woman facing injustice?

In Arabic, the word for bearing is *hamel*, which means 'to carry'. It is a word used in many contexts, including when a woman is pregnant. Women bear life, bringing human beings into the world. And women bear so much more: not only work, family, and community, but also the weight of inequality placed on them by patriarchal societies. Gender-based violence and discrimination create an unjust burden for women around the world.

Today, some churches around the world, including those in Palestine, are working for gender justice. These churches believe that women and men are created equally in God's image (Genesis 1:27), and that in Christ, there is no longer male and female (Galatians 3:28). Bearing with women in love means treating them as human beings worthy of dignity and justice. Bearing with women in love means lifting up their voices, callings, and leadership.

## Discussion

Ask participants to reflect on their own contexts. Ask people to discuss these questions with a neighbour, in small group, or in the large group. If participants brought pictures, this is the time when they can share about them.

What factions in your community divide it? On what basis is this division?

How are women treated differently, in your culture, community, and church?

How might Jewish women in Israel feel about their neighbours?

What are the ways we bear with each other?

## Closing prayer.

God of Unity, you bear with us in all our trouble. Help us bear with each other in love. Free us from the sin of human conflict and disunity. Heal your church wherever we are divided, that we may bring the good news of your grace and love into the world. In Jesus' name. Amen.



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**“I Beg You... Bear With One Another in Love”** was prepared by the World Day of Prayer Committee of Palestine for the worship service and educational activities for the 2024 World Day of Prayer (WDP) annual celebration. WDP materials are developed for the exclusive use of WDP programs organized by national or local committees and their partner organizations. For any other use, materials from the WDP 2024 Resource Packet may not be reproduced without the permission of World Day of Prayer International Committee (WDPIC).

For further information, please, contact:

World Day of Prayer International Committee

475 Riverside Drive Room 729; New York, NY. 10115. USA

[admin@worlddayofprayer.net](mailto:admin@worlddayofprayer.net) - <http://worlddayofprayer.net>

# World Day of Prayer Movement

In 1910 more than 400 women met for the World Mission Conference (Edinburgh) bringing their experience and wisdom developed through years of ecumenical partnership in many countries. WDP was born. Today World Day of Prayer is an ecumenical prayer movement bringing together millions every year from over 100 countries to pray, worship and learn.

## **Through World Day of Prayer, people are encouraged:**

to become aware of the whole world and no longer live in isolation  
to be enriched by the faith experience of Christians of other countries and cultures

to take up the burdens of other people and pray with and for them  
to become aware of their talents and use them in the service of society  
to affirm that prayer and action are inseparable and both have immeasurable influence in the world

## **Scottish Committee Mission Statement**

As representatives of the churches in Scotland, and members of a world-wide movement of Christian women, we work to promote prayerful living and worship for men, women and children, and to raise awareness of the lives and concerns of others throughout the world, especially those who write the service.

We encourage ecumenical planning for World Day of Prayer services, facilitating them by preparing material supportive of the annual international theme and country. We generate resources in support of Christian literature distribution and projects giving practical help to people in the writing country.

More information can be found on our website [www.wdpscotland.org.uk](http://www.wdpscotland.org.uk) and on our facebook page 'World Day of Prayer Scotland'.

**Friday 7th March 2025**

Service written by Christian women of the Cook Islands

“I Made You Wonderful”

# SCOTTISH COMMITTEE 2022/23

## OFFICE BEARERS

- Convenor Mary Welsh – Catholic Bishops Conference of Scotland  
4 Tweedsmuir; Bishopbriggs; Glasgow G64 1EE  
tel: 07516 310394 e-mail: marypwelsh@icloud.com
- V. Convenor Helen M Mee – United Reformed Church Synod  
9 Gordon Road; Edinburgh; Lothian; EH12 6NB  
tel: 07973 509691 e-mail: [hmmedin@aol.com](mailto:hmmedin@aol.com) / [hmmee@icloud.com](mailto:hmmee@icloud.com)
- Treasurer Suzanne Foster – Church of Scotland  
Delnapot, Blacksboat, Banffshire, AB37 9BQ  
tel: 07711 924144 e-mail: [treasurer@wdpscotland.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@wdpscotland.org.uk)
- Secretary Marjorie Paton – Church of Scotland  
Muldoanich, Stirling Street, Blackford, Perthshire, PH4 1QG  
tel: 01764 682234 e-mail: [marjoriepaton.wdp@btinternet.com](mailto:marjoriepaton.wdp@btinternet.com)
- Distribution Secretary Barbara Leppard – Church of Scotland  
70 Brucefield Ave, Dunfermline, Fife, KY11 4SY  
tel: 01383 625755 e-mail: [bleppard.wdp@gmail.com](mailto:bleppard.wdp@gmail.com)

## COMMITTEE

Elizabeth Blair (co-opt)	Church of Scotland
Ann Bowie (co-opt)	Church of Scotland
Alison Chalmers (co-opt)	Religious Society of Friends
Anna-Claar Thomasson-Rosingh	Scottish Episcopal Church Mothers' Union
Nina Cryne	Union of Catholic Mothers
Irene Houston	Salvation Army
Kathryn Howe	Salvation Army Rep for Young Women
Mary Kidd	Methodist Church
Elizabeth Mackay	United Free Church
Margaret Roy	Religious Society of Friends
Vacant	Scottish Baptist Women's Fellowship
Vacant	Church of the Nazarene
Vacant	Church of Scotland Faith Impact Forum



*World Day of Prayer (Scottish Committee)*

*Charity Number SC020446*

*Website <http://www.wdpscotland.org.uk>*