

# *Just* Faith NETWORK

## March Membership Resource

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In partnership with:





## Praying with the World



*“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.”*

### About This Resource:

Every year, the first Friday of March is the **World Day of Prayer**. This year it will be March 6, 2020. In the 19th century, Christian women in the United States and Canada initiated the celebration to support women’s involvement in mission work at home and across the globe. It was in 1928, however, that the name “World Day of Prayer” was coined. The announcement was accompanied by the following statement:

*“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.”*

This resource invites you to join the circle of the World Day of Prayer. If you can plan to hold a gathering on Friday March 6, you will be in fellowship with many groups across the world who are also celebrating the World Day of Prayer and following the same theme. If you cannot organize a gathering for March 6, you can go through the resource by yourself in solidarity with all the other groups praying that day, or you can gather a group on another day in order to introduce your community to the World Day of Prayer and encourage them to plan ahead for 2021.



The preparation for the World Day of Prayer travels from one country to another. This year the liturgy was prepared by a group of women from Zimbabwe.

This resource offers material for a one-hour prayer service.

**Just Faith Ministries invites you to deepen your prayer practice with others. Our 21-week program, EngagingSpirituality, offers an opportunity to revisit the wisdom of the teachings of our Christian tradition and rediscover the power of prayer as a tool to address the needs of our world. Visit our [website](#) to sign up!**

#### Resources:

World Day of Prayer official [website](#).

[Article](#) in The Guardian about women in Zimbabwe.

Free [material](#) for the 2020 World Day of Prayer.

Zimbabwe [profile](#) on BBC website.

Human Rights Watch [page](#) on Zimbabwe.

Wikipedia [page](#) on Zimbabwe.



## Praying with the World

### Material needed:

- Pillar candle with matches
- Laptop and speakers to play videos & listen to song
- A bible open to John 5:2-9
- Copies of the attachments A, B, C, and D

### 1) Welcome and prayer (10 minutes):

Welcome everyone with the following or similar words:

**“Welcome to this gathering! The first Friday of March marks the World Day of Prayer. This is a celebration that invites Christians all over the world to unite in prayer. Each year, a group of women from a different country prepares the theme of the World Day of Prayer. This year, the theme comes from Zimbabwe and provides an opportunity to learn more about our sisters and brothers living in this African country. The theme they chose, “Rise! Take your Mat and Walk,” is based on John 5 and the story of Jesus healing a paralytic at the Bethesda pool. Together, we’ll pray for the people of Zimbabwe, for peace and justice across the world, and reflect on the text in the Gospel of John. Let us pray.”**

Silence.

Light the candle.

Invite participants to a moment of prayer by sharing the following prayer—Attachment A.

### Prayer of Praise from the 2020 World Day of Prayer:

Reader 1: God of peace and freedom, we welcome you in our midst.

Reader 2: We praise you for your love, which surpasses all understanding.

Reader 3: We praise you for who you are, now and forever.

*All: You are an amazing God.*

Reader 4: Creator God, we praise you for the natural resources we are called to care for, like the vegetation, minerals, big animals, waterfalls, and forests of Zimbabwe.

*All: You are a gracious God.*



Reader 5: Jesus, we praise you for the gift of respect, the dignity of human life, love for one another, and for the friendliness of Zimbabwe’s hardworking people.

All: *You are the Bread of life.*

Reader 6: Holy Spirit, we praise you for enabling us to gather in worship in Zimbabwe and around the world.

All: *You are the Spirit of truth who unifies us in prayers and action. Amen.*

## 2) Learning about Zimbabwe (20 minutes):

Introduce this section with these or similar words:

**“Every year, the committee of the World Day of prayer chooses one country to write the liturgy for the World Day of Prayer. This year, a group of women in Zimbabwe are responsible for the theme and the liturgy that will be used by many groups on March 6. The World Day of Prayer represents a wonderful opportunity to learn more about the country preparing the liturgy each year; so, let us learn about Zimbabwe.”**

Invite participants to look at **Attachment B** that provides a few basic facts about Zimbabwe.

You may ask participants to share what they know about Zimbabwe by asking a few questions (you can suggest a quiz-like game with the following questions and let everyone answer individually on a piece of paper before providing the answers):

1. What is the main tourist attraction in Zimbabwe? Victoria Falls.
2. What does the word “Zimbabwe” mean in Shona language? House of Stones.
3. How big is the population of Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe? In 2019, 1,521,000.
4. What is the second largest city in the country? Bulawayo, just under 700,000 people.
5. Who is the current president of Zimbabwe? Emmerson Mnangagwa.

Set up a laptop and speakers and play the short video prepared by the committee of the World Day of Prayer that presents Zimbabwe (7:21):

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f\\_JO\\_DhEzMk&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f_JO_DhEzMk&feature=youtu.be).

After watching the video, ask participants to briefly tell everyone, going around the circle, what surprised them in the video about Zimbabwe.

End this section by listening to the theme song *Rise! Take Your Mat and Walk* composed specially for the 2020 program by WDP Zimbabwe Committee liaison, Sylvia Marowa. Go on the official page of the 2020 World Day of Prayer, scroll all the way down and you will find the



recording of the song (4:08): <https://worlddayofprayer.net/zimbabwe-2020.html>. If you want you can find the score of the song by following this link: <http://www.wdp-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Rise-Take-Your-Mat-Final.pdf>.

### 3) Biblical Exploration (20 minutes):

Introduce this section with these or similar words:

**“The World Day of Prayer is not only an opportunity to highlight a specific country, but also to hear the voices of women in this country. The initial goal of the Day of Prayer was to recognize Christian women’s contributions to the life of the Church. Each national committee for the World Day of Prayer is composed of women, who offer their perspectives on biblical themes and texts. This year, the women of Zimbabwe invite us to reflect on John 5:2-9. Let us first read the text together.”**

Invite participants to go to **Attachment C** or open their bible. Share the reading of the text together. Read it twice.

#### **John 5:2-9 (New International Version):**

*Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?”*

*“Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.”*

*Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.*

After reading the text, break into small groups of 3 or 4 people if you can, and invite each group to reflect around two or three of the following questions:

1. The women of Zimbabwe chose this text to talk about Jesus’ healing power. How do you understand this choice? How could the text apply to the reality of women in Zimbabwe? To the reality of women in general?



2. The disabled man doesn't ever say "yes" to Jesus' question, "Do you want to get well?" Are there examples in your life when you cannot say yes to being well? What helps you see through, get up, and walk?
3. The order is to "pick up the mat" and then "walk." In your opinion, what does the mat represent – in the biblical text and in your life?
4. Where is the newly-healed man going? We do not follow his steps after the healing, where do you imagine that he went?

Gather everyone back into the circle and ask each group to briefly report one or two key points from their conversations.

#### 4) Closing Prayer (10 minutes):

Invite people to close this time together with the following or similar words:

**"The world gathers each year to pray together with one country for peace and justice. The World Day of Prayer weaves across the entire globe a web of gatherings, prayers of thanksgiving, intercessions, and praise so that Christians can support each other and show their love for God and God's creation. May we be a part of this web, and may we expand it one person at a time, and make it strong and long-lasting. As we depart, let us pray!"**

Hand out **Attachment D** and invite participants to share the closing prayer.

#### Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession from the 2020 World Day of Prayer:

Reader 1: Let us join together with the provinces of Zimbabwe and worldwide to give thanks to God. Let us rise and walk in Jesus' unconditional love.

*All: From our corner of the world, we rise and walk.*

Reader 2: Please continue to bless us with the gift of life and protection, good rains and fertile soil.

*All: We are caretakers of God's creation.*

Reader 3: We lament for our brothers and sisters who had to migrate to other countries. We ask you to protect them and give them good health.

*All: Help us learn to love one another.*

Reader 4: We intercede for communities and women who live in fear of violence in families and nations.

*All: Give us wisdom and grace to be peacemakers.*



Reader 5: We thank you for the courageous and hardworking pioneer women of World Day of Prayer Zimbabwe who taught their communities to pray, love, and forgive.

All: *May we carry on the legacy of courageous women in our communities.*

Leader: Let us pray together the Lord's Prayer.

All: *Our Father, who art in heaven . . .*

Conclude by repeating the theme of this year's World Day of Prayer:

*Rise! Take your Mat and Walk.*

Extinguish candle.





## Attachment A: Opening Prayer

### Prayer of Praise from the 2020 World Day of Prayer

Reader 1: God of peace and freedom, we welcome you in our midst.

Reader 2: We praise you for your love, which surpasses all understanding.

Reader 3: We praise you for who you are, now and forever.

*All: You are an amazing God.*

Reader 4: Creator God, we praise you for the natural resources we are called to care for, like the vegetation, minerals, big animals, waterfalls, and forests of Zimbabwe.

*All: You are a gracious God.*

Reader 5: Jesus, we praise you for the gift of respect, the dignity of human life, love for one another, and for the friendliness of Zimbabwe's hardworking people.

*All: You are the Bread of life.*

Reader 6: Holy Spirit, we praise you for enabling us to gather in worship in Zimbabwe and around the world.

*All: You are the Spirit of truth who unifies us in prayers and action. Amen.*



## Attachment B: Quick Facts about Zimbabwe



**Continent:** Africa

**Capital City:** Harare

**Government:** Parliamentary Democracy, but has suffered from the dictatorship of Robert Mugabe for 37 years; he was overthrown in 2017

**Population:** 13,805,084

**Major People Groups:** Bantu Peoples 97.8%, other African 0.6%, other 1.6%

**Religion:** Christian 80.1%, Roman Catholic 7.3%, Trad 1.5%, Muslim 0.5%, other 0.1%, Non 10.5%

**Languages:** 16 different languages including Shona, Ndebele, and English

**GDP Per Capita:** \$2,300

**Literacy Rate:** 86.5%

“Once the bread basket of the region, since 2000 Zimbabwe has struggled to feed its own people due to severe droughts and the effects of a land reform programme that saw white-owned farms redistributed to landless Zimbabweans, with sharp falls in production. The fall of Robert Mugabe in 2017 freed up politics and the media, but the country remains cash-strapped and impoverished.” [BBC profile of the country]



### Attachment C: John 5:2-9

#### John 5:2-9 (New International Version):

[If you want more information about the text, you can download a bible study on the official website of the World Day of Prayer. Follow this link and scroll down to “Additional Resources:”

<https://worlddayofprayer.net/zimbabwe-2020.html>

*Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?”*

*“Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.”*

*Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.*

#### Reflect:

1. The women of Zimbabwe chose this text to talk about Jesus’ healing power. How do you understand this choice? How could the text apply to the reality of women in Zimbabwe? To the reality of women in general?
2. The disabled man doesn’t ever say “yes” to Jesus’ question, “Do you want to get well?” Are there examples in your life when you cannot say yes to being well? What helps you see through, get up, and walk?
3. The order is to “pick up the mat” and then “walk.” In your opinion, what does the mat represent – in the biblical text and in your life?



4. Where is the newly-healed man going? We do not follow his steps after the healing, where do you imagine that he went?



The group of women from Zimbabwe who prepared the material for the 2020 World Day of Prayer



## Attachment D: Closing Prayer

### Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession from the 2020 World Day of Prayer

Reader 1: Let us join together with the provinces of Zimbabwe and worldwide to give thanks to God. Let us rise and walk in Jesus' unconditional love.

*All: From our corner of the world, we rise and walk.*

Reader 2: Please continue to bless us with the gift of life and protection, good rains and fertile soil.

*All: We are caretakers of God's creation.*

Reader 3: We lament for our brothers and sisters who had to migrate to other countries. We ask you to protect them and give them good health.

*All: Help us learn to love one another.*

Reader 4: We intercede for communities and women who live in fear of violence in families and nations.

*All: Give us wisdom and grace to be peacemakers.*

Reader 5: We thank you for the courageous and hardworking pioneer women of World Day of Prayer Zimbabwe who taught their communities to pray, love, and forgive.

*All: May we carry on the legacy of courageous women in our communities.*

Leader: Let us pray together the Lord's Prayer.

*All: Our Father, who art in heaven . . .*