



History of the Baptist Women's Day of Prayer

The Baptist World Day of Prayer is central in the program of the BWA Women's Department. This annual observance is the means for promoting understanding and sympathy and for drawing together Baptist women around the world. Indeed, the Day of prayer is the lifeline, the umbilical cord, if you please, to the success and well being of this movement of Baptist Women. Offerings taken on this day provide a large portion of funds needed for the Department's maintenance and ministries.

It was the European women, the first to organize themselves into a continental union, who gave birth to the idea of a special day of Prayer among Baptist women. It began in 1948, following the devastation and division of World War 2.

Historians mention finding earlier references to plans for a special prayer time. However, those informal prayer times remained just that. Plans for a day set aside for this purpose did not materialize until the late 1940's.

After the devastation of the Second World War, Baptist women in Europe felt compelled to begin the healing processes for women isolated by war and national loyalties. The first Day of Prayer was promoted as "a means to reunite Baptists separated by the pain and devastation of war, and to strengthen the spiritual bonds in years to come."

Promotion of the movement spread quickly to other continents. A number of women leaders met in Cleveland, Ohio, USA, prior to the 1950 world congress. The purpose of that meeting was to make plans to extend the observance of this special day, and to discuss organizing other continental unions including the North American Baptist Women's Union.

Since that eventful period, the Day of Prayer movement among Baptist women has grown. Observances now reach women in nearly every country where there are Baptist groups.

Born out of war and the desire to seek spiritual communion and unity, we are compelled to note that many Baptist women this day suffer the violence and isolation of war. In many countries women meet to pray amid rubble caused by violence, while others fear daily for their safety and well being.

The Day of Prayer observance links women of the world, providing spiritual lifelines that strengthen and give hope. Who can measure the courage gained by these women, realizing that their sisters in other countries are praying for them? Many Baptist sisters in Eastern Europe say that it is prayer that brought freedom and peace too many of their countries as experienced in 1990. The need continues!

In some parts of the globe women are known to walk several miles, some over and down mountains, to reach appointed places of prayer. In parts of Asia and Africa it is reported that women swim small rivers and streams to participate in the Day of Prayer. Is it any wonder the movement has grown? With such courage and devotion Baptist women will continue to be the strength of their churches.

A different continental union writes the program for the annual Day of Prayer each year. From time to time, the program relates to the particular culture and needs of that continent, with prayer requests offered for that area of the world. Often the copy is largely Bible study of a general nature, following an assigned topic, with prayer request that encircle the globe.

In the international office the director edits the copy sent from the continental union writers, and has the printing done, ready for mailing. In addition, a number of Baptist Women's magazines reprint the programs providing a wider coverage for their particular language group.

Early each year copies are sent to more than 150 translators.

The translators and national leaders send copies to the appropriate language groups. The Women's Department request copies of the translated program and supplies copies upon request, as well as on the Department's website at www.bwawd.org . This is an important ministry among women since many industrialized countries have become multi-cultural societies, with church's that have many language groups worshipping in urban areas.