

# World Day of Prayer 2016 • Supplemental Materials

## The World Day of Prayer Committee of Cuba

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The first World Day of Prayer service in Cuba dates back to 1930. According to the book, *Salvadas para Servir, Memoria Histórica de la Unión Nacional*



*de Mujeres Presbiterianas de Cuba* (Saved to Serve: Historical Account of the National Union of Cuban Presbyterian Women), the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Cuba was the first recorded church to celebrate World Day of Prayer (WDP) in Cuba. The United Methodist Church celebrated WDP in Cuba for the first time on February 20, 1931. And by 1972, the Salvation Army was celebrating WDP in Cuba. These three denominations were the first to have direct contact with the World Day of Prayer services, thanks to their counterparts in the United States who sent programs to them. The first Friday of March each year became a very special day among Methodist, Presbyterian and Salvation Army women in Cuba, many of who joyfully recount their rich experiences celebrating WDP.

In 1975, International Year of the Woman, the Council of Evangelical Churches of Cuba organized its Women's Department, which was recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Dora Valentín (1925–1992) of the Presbyterian Reformed Church was elected its first president. The work of the Women's Department gained recognition from women in the Cuban evangelical world. According to Valentín's testimony in the book, *Dora Valentín, una Cristiana en Revolución* (*Dora Valentín, a Christian in Revolution*), "[f]or the first time, we celebrated WDP ecumenically in 1981, and we sent it to the sisters. Sister Lois Kroehler translated it into Spanish, and so it was distributed to the churches."

Dora Valentín and Lois Kroehler, the only United States Presbyterian missionary who stayed in Cuba after the triumph of the Revolution in 1959, promoted the celebration of

World Day of Prayer. Methodist sisters Rita Oliva and Ana Luisa Puertas joined the effort and helped with translation, printing and distributing the program. The successive directors of the Council of Churches' Women's Department upheld the WDP celebrations as part of its events and programs.

In 2011, a WDP strengthening workshop was held during the WDP National Committee meeting. Since then, the WDP Cuba committee has disseminated the WDP program in conjunction with the Women and Gender Program of the Council of Churches of Cuba. The committee chair is Ormara Nolla Cao, from the Fraternity of Baptist Churches of Cuba; the secretary is Isis García Basulto from the Roman Catholic Church; the treasurer is Noemí Manrique Arango from the Church of Christ; and the program and project coordinator is Sandra Zaldívar Ferrer from the Salvation Army. There are also regional coordinators: Rosario Concepción Fernández from the Church of Friends (Quakers) leads the eastern region, Amelia Pérez Muñiz from the Eastern Baptist Convention leads the central region, and Aleida Palacios Cuny from the Apostolic Church of Jesus leads the western region. With more than 20 WDP resource persons from ecumenical organizations in Cuba, the women of Cuba developed a thoughtful worship service and resource materials for the 2016 celebration.

On the first Friday of March, there are more than 20 services celebrated in locations throughout the country, with approximately 30 denominations joining in prayer, reflection, unity and action.