



## World Day of Prayer

Prepared by the WDP Committee of Vanuatu

5 March 2021

**‘Build on a Strong Foundation’**

**Worship Service**

*Detailed notes to help in the preparation for this service can be found on p.17 of this booklet.*

*When entering the worship area, please ensure you collect a stone to hold during the service.*

### **PROCESSION**

*When everyone is seated, the leaders, readers and voices from Vanuatu enter singing and dancing as music from Vanuatu is played.*

*Leader 1 carries a candle to the table and lights it. Reader 1 carries a Bible and leaves it open at Matthew 7:24-27.*

*The three Ni-Vanuatu women - Rhetoh, Mothy and Jacklynda - carry the Vanuatu flag and country items and place them on the table.*

### **WELCOME**

**Leader 1:** Welcome to the 2021 World Day of Prayer service, prepared by the Christian women of the Republic of Vanuatu. We welcome our sisters and brothers around the world in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

**SONG** *Listening to the Voices from Vanuatu*

### **CALL TO WORSHIP**

*A gong or drum is beaten (or, if possible, a large conch shell blown) as a call to worship.*

**Leader 1:** Let us hear the first verse of Psalm 127: ‘Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain. Unless the Lord guards the city, the guard keeps watch in vain.’ (Psalm 127:1)

**All: Happy is everyone who trusts God the house-builder. Amen.**

**Reader 1:** Our service focuses on the people of Vanuatu, a small country located in the South Pacific Ocean, whose languages, values and spirituality originate mostly from Melanesian and Polynesian cultures. The black and white sandy beaches, coral reefs with colourful fish, lovely birds, fruits and nuts in the forest all make the islands a pristine environment, even though they are vulnerable to frequent tropical storms, earthquakes, cyclones, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions.

All the islands and villages used to have their own chiefs and style of governance, their own gods, their own languages and thatched houses made from leaves and trees felled using stone axes. Women and men would come together to discuss major issues at the village meeting house called the *Farea*. [*Far-e-a*]

A republic formed in 1980 after gaining independence from a French and British condominium government. Today, Vanuatu proudly waves its flag and displays its coat of arms for anyone to read, ‘In God we stand’, which in Bislama is ‘Long God Yumi Stanap’. [*Long God you-me stan-up*]

**All: Long God Yumi Stanap.** [*Long God you-me stan-up*]

**SONG** *Yahweh, you are my strength and salvation*

*The prayers of thanksgiving, confession, and commitment are interspersed with verses from the song 'Father, I place into your hands'. Please stay seated for these.*

## **PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

**Leader 2:** Let us be thankful for the great things God has done.

Holy, Holy, Holy God, creator of the heavens and the earth and all that is in them, you are present in the history of your people from the beginning to today. Loving God, on whom Vanuatu stands, we adore you.

Thank you for the fellowship with each other and with sisters around the world gathered on this World Day of Prayer.

Thank you for the great and wonderful things in our lives and in our nations. You grant us authority, wisdom, knowledge and understanding to care for all beautiful islands and countries.

Thank you for the fertile lands, for the fresh air, clean environment, beautiful sunshine, blue seas and still waters of the Vanuatu islands.

Thank you for the sweet melody of the birds, the sound of land animals, and the mystery of the fish in the sea and rivers. Thank you for the waterfalls that rain down their waters and serenely declare to us your greatness and power.

Thank you for the sound of children singing, laughing and shouting, and for the prayers and songs of the old and the young which manifest the joy of your love.

**All: Praise, honour and glory be unto you alone forever. Life-giving God, receive our praise.**

**SONG** *Father, I place into your hands*

## **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

**Leader 3:** Let us confess our wrong actions to God, who is faithful and just, and ask for forgiveness.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. We stand before your house of grace to confess our sins. We confess that we have listened to your word but have not acted on it. Often, we do the things we ought not to do and leave undone the things we ought to do.

We face adversities and challenges in our homes and nations. We try to build our homes, thinking we are building on the words of Jesus Christ, but actually we have built on the sand. We want to be changed so that we do what is right and just.

Creator God, we confess that we have polluted the environment and harmed the sea creatures by throwing rubbish into their habitats. We endanger the marine life and ruin sustainable livelihoods. We confess and regret our actions, and we commit to fulfil the mandate to be good stewards of your creation. We know we can change.

**Reader 2:** In the UK we are often drawn by uncertainties and fear instead of living with integrity and standing up against injustice. We need the presence of your Holy Spirit, to cleanse and renew us once more.

**All: God, hear our prayers.**

**SONG** *Father, I place into your hands*

## **PRAYER OF COMMITMENT**

**Leader 1:** God is looking for a house to live in: 'What is the house that you would build for me?'. (Isaiah 66:1)

We come humbly before you and pray that you will grant us your Spirit of wisdom and knowledge. Teach us to discern the truth. Lead and guide us to live in a way that is pleasing and acceptable to you.

Trusting in you, we know we can change. Help us to build our lives on your foundation: with windows that look out to the world; with a door that opens to welcome all; with mortar which binds us together; with a roof that shelters us through the storms of life.

We humbly offer ourselves to be a house that you can dwell in. By the power of your word, transform our lives and our nations. Make us like a household of justice and peace.

**All: Gracious God, accept our commitment.**

**SONG** *Father, I place into your hands*

#### **LISTENING TO THE VOICES FROM VANUATU**

**Rhetoh:** My name is Rhetoh [*Reh-toe*]. I am the second child from a family of eight. I left school at the end of year six as there was no money to continue my education. My family educated my older brother but not me as I am the second born and a girl. One day I heard there was a sewing class for girls at a local centre. I applied and was accepted, but my father had no money to pay the fees. I was disheartened, but I did not have my own money to finance my studies.

I sincerely desired to enhance my education, but there was no opportunity in a formal school system. Then I turned my attention to the church to fulfil my aspiration to learn. I joined the youth group, attended Bible studies and later became involved with women's ministry. With this determination and faith in God, I found ways to educate myself and even acquired skills to earn a living to provide for my family. Other women have done the same. I now make items and sell them at Mamas Markets. With this income I am

able to care for my family, my husband and three children, which God has blessed me with.

I praise God for the blessings in my life. I thank God for being the source of my strength, and for helping me put into practice what I have learned. I have become strong and wise in the Lord.

**Reader 1:** In Vanuatu, many children in the rural areas walk long distances to go to school. Some have to leave home and attend boarding school from a very young age. Education for all is not mandatory, and equal access to schooling for boys and girls is still in progress. While Bislama is a common language for most in Vanuatu, with many smaller regional languages spoken across the islands, official schooling is given in either French or English.

**Reader 2:** What a contrast to the UK where all boys and girls have the opportunity to attend school, usually near their homes or a short bus or train ride away; where boarding school is a privilege and a choice, not a dreaded necessity; and where more languages are being used for instruction as our population grows and changes.

*Pause*

**Mothy:** My name is Mothy [*Moth-ee*]. My little brother and I grew up in a single-parent home. When my mother remarried, she left us with our grandparents. When my father remarried, he took us to live with his new family. After our stepmother gave birth to her children, her attitude towards us changed altogether.

With more children to feed, and not enough room in the house for all of us, I had to find my own food in the streets and sleep outside the house in a shack. I used an old sack as a blanket to protect me from the cold.

I met some Christians who told me that God loved me. I could not understand this kind of love in the midst of my suffering, but I decided to

trust. I trusted that God would take care of me, even though my family was not sheltering me. This trust grew inside me and became the foundation of my life. I am strong in my Christian faith and share my story with others that we should trust in God and his provision.

May everyone have a place they call home. Today, I pray for children who, like me, grew up almost by themselves. May we all recognise that our God loves them. May they know God's love.

**Reader 1:** Vanuatu's estimated population growth is one of the highest in the Pacific region. Malnutrition is a concern in both rural and urban areas. The tradition of growing organic food in gardens is strong; however, the food industries of powdered milk and junk food are impacting the health of our babies and children.

**Reader 2:** Even though many things in the UK are different, our growing population faces similar challenges and threats to the well-being and health of our children.

*Pause*

**Jacklynda:** My name is Jacklynda. I come from a rural village. From a young age I dreamt of working in tourism. I travelled to Port Vila to get a job in hospitality, but I don't have the training to get my dream job. I have no family here, so I am living on the outskirts of the city. I lack the money for proper accommodation, food or to return back to my village. I know that this is not the plan God has for me, but I don't know what to do. I pray that the rural areas of Vanuatu might be valued, and that young people find the opportunities they search for in their own communities. I trust that God will provide for young people to grow and contribute to the wellbeing of Vanuatu.

**Reader 1:** With few employment options in rural areas, young people have to migrate to towns and cities. They often arrive with minimal education

and no vocational skills and so employment is difficult to find. This creates a generation that sees no future. There is a need for policies and programmes for the betterment of rural areas, so that young people can be educated and find employment in their own communities.

**Reader 2:** Villages and rural communities in the UK face their own challenges as access to transportation and services is cut back. As in Vanuatu, many young people in the UK face an unknown future which too often involves prospects of unemployment and uncertainty.

### **SONG *Shifting Sands***

#### **LISTENING TO THE WORD OF GOD**

**Leader 2:** Let us hear the word of God according to the Gospel of Matthew.

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall! (Matthew 7:24-27)

#### **MEDITATION**

**Reader 2:** This parable is a story of comparison and warning. Jesus offers us an example of how our choices can affect our lives. We now have a time of silent meditation for inner reflection. Please feel free to write your thoughts on the back cover of the service booklet.

*Pause*

Sometimes we are beaten by winds and storms in every corner of our lives. Due to our deep faith in Jesus we find ourselves still standing.

What are the storms in your life today?

*Pause*

How is your faith providing a solid foundation for you?

*Pause*

Jesus says: 'Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man'. We are very good at acting. But do we hear? Do we listen?

What practices in prayer help you hear and listen closely to the Word of God?

*Pause*

The parable presents us a choice: to be like a wise person or a foolish one. Do we listen to his words and act on them, or ignore them and let them wash over us? Our lives reflect the choices we make. Our legacy is the action we take.

How can we, through our choices and actions, live wisely?

*Pause*

## **OFFERING**

**Leader 1:** The World Day of Prayer is a women-led, global, ecumenical movement. Each year we admire the strength of the communities who participate, empathise with their concerns, and are encouraged by their faith.

The offerings given at these services allow the World Day of Prayer movement to support Christian charities and act in response to global emergencies.

*The offering is collected during the song 'My hope is built on nothing less' which can be sung seated or standing depending on normal offertory practice in the host church.*

*See the back of this service booklet for a list of grants allocated in 2019 and see the website ([wwdp.org.uk](http://wwdp.org.uk)) for additional details.*

*If you are a UK taxpayer and wish to Gift Aid your offering, please use the Gift Aid envelope provided and be sure to fill in all the details.*

## **SONG *My hope is built on nothing less***

**Leader 3:** Gracious God, we worship you and thank you for all the blessings you have bestowed upon us, for family and friends, home, food and water. We praise you for leading us to be creative and able to support our families. In gratitude we offer these gifts and dedicate them to the work of the World Day of Prayer. May they be shared with communities in need, both close to home and around the world.

**All: Amen.**

## **PRAYERS FOR VANUATU AND THE WORLD**

**Leader 1:** Let us be united in prayer with Vanuatu and the world.

Everlasting God, the God on whom Vanuatu stands, we ask you to help us stand for peace in our families and our nations. We commit the leaders and people of Vanuatu into your wise hands.

We want to stand against the forces of injustice present in our nations. Give us this authority over our islands and nations.

We pray that we can live in unity, love and peace in the context of ethnic and cultural diversity like Vanuatu and so many other places around the world.

**All: Bind us together in love, peace and joy.**

**Leader 1:** We pray for young women in Vanuatu who search for work and meaning, especially those who, hoping for a better life, move to the towns and cities, away from family and friends. May they develop the skills they need to find work, live wisely and fulfil their dreams.

We pray for the children of Vanuatu who do not have the opportunity to attend school, and for those on the streets who feel unloved and unwanted. May they find safe shelter and nourishment in their communities and in the embrace of God.

**All: May they learn of, and trust in, God's love, through the outreach of others.**

**Leader 1:** We remember people living in places prone to natural disasters and the hazards of cyclones, hurricanes and volcanoes.

**All: Almighty God, protect communities from disasters and suffering. Heal the souls of the people and let them feel your love.**

**Leader 1:** We pray for the Christian community in Vanuatu, that they may extend God's justice and love to everyone.

**All: May they be a living example of a community built on the strong foundation of Christ.**

**Leader 1:** Let us join together in the Lord's Prayer.

**All: Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;**

**thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.**

## **OUR ACT OF COMMITMENT**

**Leader 2:** You chose a stone at the beginning of the service. I invite you to hold it now and look at it. Your stone is special, like you. Its shape is unique; its colour is unique; its flaws are unique.

God the house-builder uses each one of us as a stone to build a strong foundation of love. Will we make the commitment to build our lives on this foundation? Will we hear and will we act?

Think of this stone as a representation of your personal prayers and commitment to God. Exchange your stone with someone near you, that they may hold you, Vanuatu and this day in their mind in the year ahead.

*Pause and allow time for stones to be exchanged.*

May our lives be built on a strong foundation. Let us repeat the Ni-Vanuatu motto - 'In God we stand'.

**All: Long God Yumi Stanap. Amen!** [*Long God you-me stan-up*]

**SONG** *Lord dismiss us with thy blessing*

**SENDING AND BLESSING**

**Leader 3:** We welcome God's dwelling presence in and with us. Let God guide you, lead you, restore you and heal your nation. Let God's will be done in your house as it is in heaven.

Remember as you go out - everyone who hears the words of Jesus and acts on them will be like a wise person and their house will withstand the floods. Go and build your house on Jesus' words.

Go home blessed in the wonderful name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and King.

**All: Jesus' word is our strong foundation. We will follow Jesus – the Way, the Truth and the Life. Amen.**

**SONG** *The Day thou Gavest*