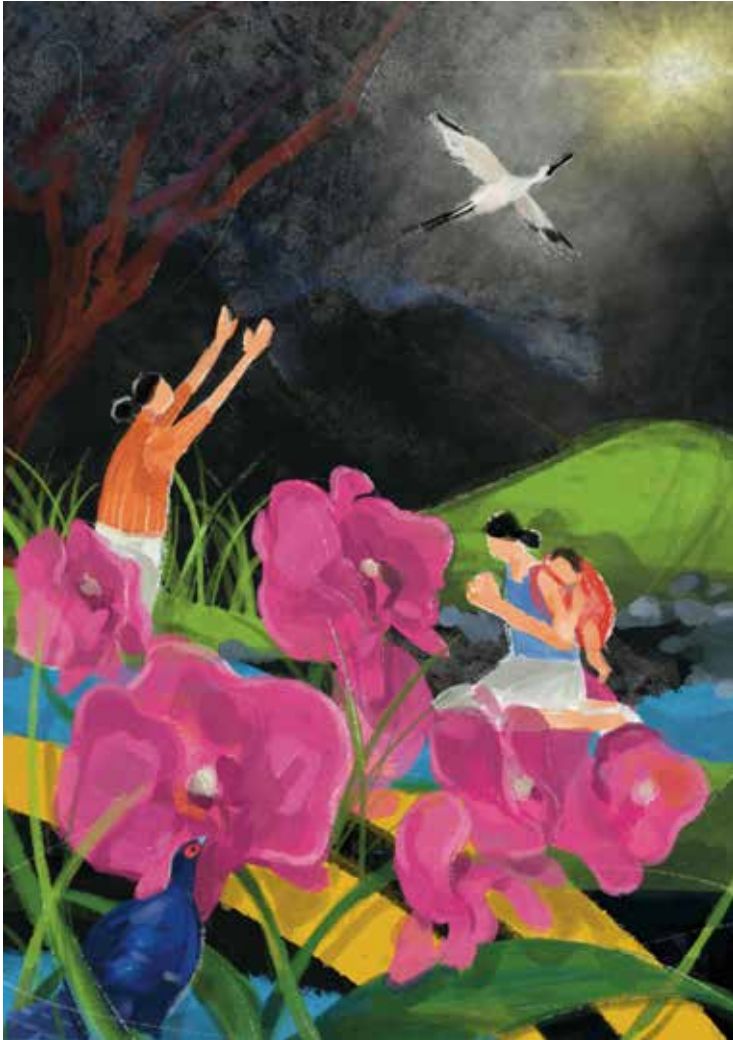


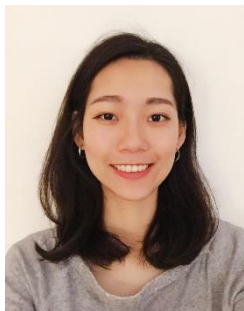
# World Day of Prayer

*Ecumenical Service, Friday 3 March 2023*



**“I Have Heard About Your Faith”**

*Prepared by the WDP Committee of Taiwan. Adapted for use in  
New Zealand by World Day of Prayer Aotearoa New Zealand.*



## Artist

**Hui-Wen HSAIO** was born in Tainan, Taiwan, in 1993. In 2017, she received her bachelor's degree in Visual Communication Design at Kun Shan University in Tainan. She is currently pursuing a master's degree in Intermedia Art Therapy (Intermediale Kunsttherapie) at MSH Medical School in Hamburg, Germany.

“Ever since I was young, I have attended a Presbyterian church with my mother and brother. Engaging with God's words and experiencing the liturgy have shaped and strengthened my faith. The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan traditionally holds worship services in Taiwanese (Tâi-gí), which demonstrates the significance of preserving the language. Even though young people nowadays commonly speak Mandarin, I value that my faith has been nurtured by communicating it in Taiwanese.

As a woman, I want to explore the female identity through my artwork. The subjects of my art always depict the relationship of mothers, women, and people. In my exhibitions, I compose my artwork to express my observation, gratitude, and faith.

I cherish my God-given talents and serve God with my artwork. I humbly hope people will know God through my art.”

## Artist's Explanation

Taiwan has a history of being colonized by different foreign governments, which led to experiences of ethnic, cultural, social and political conflict and integration. The artist used several motifs that highlight Taiwan's best-known features to express how the Christian faith brings peace and a new vision to Taiwan.

The women in the painting are sitting by a stream, praying silently and looking up into the dark. Despite the uncertainty of the path ahead, they know that the salvation of Christ has come.

Two endangered species are featured: the Mikado pheasant and the Black-faced Spoonbill, which are both of unique significance to the Taiwanese people. The Mikado pheasant is endemic to mountainous regions of Taiwan and is usually regarded as one of Taiwan's national birds. The Black-faced Spoonbill migrates thousands of miles every year to spend the winter in Taiwan. Their distinctiveness symbolizes a characteristic of the Taiwanese people—confidence and perseverance in times of difficulty.

The green grass and Phalaenopsis (Butterfly) orchids stand out against the dark background. They are the pride of Taiwan, which has a worldwide reputation as the “Kingdom of Orchids”. In recent decades, Taiwanese orchid exports have increased, and Butterfly orchids have frequently been featured in international competitions. This beautiful island is known for its rich natural resources. Green grass represents the Taiwanese as simple, confident, strong and under God's care.



## World Day of Prayer

Prepared by the WDP Committee of Taiwan

Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2023

**“I Have Heard About Your Faith”**

### Worship Service

#### Orientation

- Practice in advance all hymns.
- All music is available on the World Day of Prayer website – [www.worlddayofprayer.org.nz](http://www.worlddayofprayer.org.nz)
- Decorate the front stage with the following materials:
  - Blue cloth (Taiwan is nurtured by the ocean); Green cloth (Taiwan is covered in mountain peaks); Yellow cloth and White cloth (Taiwan is rich in natural resources); Arrange lilies and orchids. Another option: folding paper flowers, see the website: [Origami Lily Instructions \(origami-fun.com\)](http://Origami Lily Instructions (origami-fun.com))
- Place in advance Taiwan map puzzle on the podium (see the World Day of Prayer website – [www.worlddayofprayer.org.nz](http://www.worlddayofprayer.org.nz) ).
- Before the Worship Service, play Taiwanese music. Let the congregation get familiar with Taiwan.
- When the Prelude song starts, the five women from the stories walk toward the Taiwan map puzzle. Then the five women will put the puzzle pieces up on the map. The Mosaic Map of Taiwan symbolizes the diversity of the country.
- Read the Bible Study for the complete version of the reflection based on Ephesians 1:15-19 (NRSV).

## Order of Worship

**Leader:** Let us begin the worship service by playing a pictorial recording provided by the Taiwanese women. This introduces us to, and gives us a feel of, the country we will be praying with. To access the slideshow follow this YouTube link – <https://youtu.be/N-GeveGHKqQ>

**Prelude:** “Sing Praise and Thanksgiving” ‘With One Voice no.25’ Words by Paul Gerhardt translated and adapted by M Barclay and C A Gibson. Used with permission

Sing praise and thanksgiving, let all creatures living  
now worship their maker with gladness and song;  
all glory and honour we come to him bringing:

O praise to the Almighty,  
sing praise to our God!

(The five women walk toward the Taiwan map puzzle. The five women put the puzzle pieces up on the map.)

### Welcome and Greetings

**Leader 1:** “P’ing-an.” This phrase in Taiwanese means “May God grant you peace, a peaceful relationship with God and with one another.”

**Leader 2:** Welcome! On behalf of the sisters in Taiwan, we would like to welcome all of you to join us today in worship.

**Leader 1:** Dear sisters and brothers, through this celebration, we would like to share our experiences with you, and witness God’s wonderful grace and mighty works.

**Song:** “Love Is Your Way” (God in Your Grace) Hope Is Our Song 95 The NZ Hymnbook Trust Music Per Harling. © Words Shirley Erena Murray. Used with permission

Love is your way, love is your nature,  
blessing each creature, lighting each day;  
grace is your sign, gift of forgiveness,  
chalice that changes water to wine

**Refrain** God, in your grace, God in your mercy,  
turn us to you to transform the world!  
turn us to you to transform the world!

Let us stand still, look at each other,  
sister and brother thwarting your will:  
teach us good care, grace to seek pardon,  
reclaim your garden, riches to share

**Refrain**

## **Call to Worship**

**Leader 1:** Praise to the Lord, we thank God for all the blessings bestowed upon Taiwan.

**Leader 2:** Praise God, the Creator, who created this beautiful island covered with mountain forests and nurtured by the ocean. Taiwan is rich in natural resources.

*All: Let the name of the Lord be praised. May your glory be with us.*

**Leader 1:** More than one hundred years ago, missionaries who came to Taiwan spread the good news. The people heard the gospel and received the grace of salvation.

*All: Let the name of the Lord be praised. May your glory be with us.*

**Leader 2:** Since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Taiwan has been colonized by different foreign forces and experienced ethnic, cultural, social, political conflict and integration. By the Grace of God, the people on

this island can live in peace. Taiwan shows great hospitality and is willing to help and become a blessing to others.

**All: *Gracious God, we thank you and praise you. May your glory be with us.***

**Song:** “Simply To Be” Hope is Our Song 118 The NZ Hymnbook Trust © Words Shirley Erena Murray, Music Colin Gibson. Used with permission

Simply to be, to be in stillness,  
simply to trust that God is here,  
simply to know the Holy Presence is to be blessed;  
so am I blessed.

### **Prayer of Confession**

**Prayer 1:** Forgiving God, we confess our sins to you. We sin against you. We have failed to take care of the land you entrusted to us and have used it in unrighteous ways causing pollution and the extinction of various species.

**All: *Oh Lord, have mercy on us.***

**Prayer 2:** Gracious God, we are selfish and arrogant. We have overlooked human dignity; we ignore the needs of minorities, migrants, and immigrants. We hear the cries of the land, women, children, and young people, but we have not done enough to respond to the grace that we received. These actions have caused some people to suffer and be oppressed.

**All: *Oh Lord, have mercy on us.***

**Song:** “Simply To Be” © Words Shirley Erena Murray, Music Colin Gibson. Used with permission

Simply to hold the given moment,  
simply to lay concern aside,

simply to let the heart be speaking, is to be blessed;  
so am I blessed.

### **Assurance of Pardon**

**Leader 1:** O God, you are faithful and righteous. May you forgive us, cleanse away our sins, and help us live in the light. May you give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation as we come to know you and be filled with love and faith. May you reveal yourself to us so that we may know the immeasurable greatness of your power.

**All: Amen**

**Song:** “Simply To Be” © Words Shirley Erena Murray, Music Colin Gibson. Used with permission

So am I blessed within God’s keeping,  
so am I freed from pointless stress,  
steadied to feel the soul replenished, given this grace,  
folded in peace.

### **The Word of God and the Witness of Life**

**Reader:**

**Scripture Reading:** Ephesians 1: 15-19 (NRSV)

*I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.*

**Meditation:** Paul gave thanks to God for the Ephesians living out their love and faith. He prayed that they would receive a spirit of wisdom and revelation and would “come to know [God]” through the light and inspiration of the Holy Spirit!

Oftentimes we are frustrated by difficulties and obstacles and may even lose our hope and faith, or rely on our weak human nature. However, we are called to keep our “hope and faith” in God’s kingdom and promises. Through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, we come to see the faithful, loving, and gracious God.

Throughout the letter, the author shared his prayers for the saints in the trust that they could grasp how wide and long and high and deep the love of Christ is (Ephesians 3:18). Should we be willing to respond to that love by living not for ourselves but for God? The love of Christ may be revealed through our actions, which will point to God’s glorious and abundant inheritance!

In the eyes of God, we are not pieces of confetti that go with the wind without a specific direction, but irreplaceable pieces of a puzzle. Despite our different social backgrounds, regional contexts, and diverse cultures, we come to unity in Jesus Christ.

*Silence for meditation.*

**Leader 2:** We have heard the faith stories of women and girls in Taiwan, and we are sending them a letter of encouragement. Let us hear the letters.



## Woman 1

Dear Sister Pao-Chu

Last time we met at the gathering I heard your stories about the urgency of protecting the environment. Your story of faith impacted me, and I have followed in your footsteps ever since. I have recycled resources, joined a beach cleaning, and sorted waste at home. I carry my own cutlery and cup to mitigate the plastic crisis. Most importantly, I teach our next generations to protect the environment. We hope that Taiwan can be a nuclear-free homeland in the future. Let us learn together to become good stewards of God's creation.

*(Silence)*

**Response hymn (speak or play music): “I have heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, I have heard about your love toward all the saints. I have not stopped giving thanks for you, and remembering you in my prayers.”**

Words: Ephesians 1:15-16. Music: Lai, Yin-ting. Composed especially for the 2023 WDP Taiwan programme. ©WDPIC. Used with permission.

## Woman 2

Dear Sister Fen-Jiau

I have heard of your faith. You, a middle-aged, indigenous woman, have become a wonderful blessing to women of a similar age.

As a homemaker, you have dedicated yourself to your family for decades. When you tried to find a job to support your family, you were challenged at the workplace. You faced discrimination because of your age and felt pressured to accept social rules against women. You felt like you were neglecting your family responsibility, while taking care of your family was the reason you looked for a job. Facing a dilemma,

you trusted God’s guidance and found the path to support your family by teaching traditional weaving and taking care of your tribe. Your creative potential and strength thrived once again. Your testimony is a wonderful blessing that inspires many sisters.

*(Silence)*

**Response hymn (speak or play music): “I have heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, I have heard about your love toward all the saints. I have not stopped giving thanks for you, and remembering you in my prayers.”**

### **Woman 3**

Dear Sister Jojo

When you were young, your father asked you to get a job instead of letting you pursue your education. From his perspective, girls do not need an education but to get married instead. However, you insisted on continuing your studies.

You asked God to give you wisdom to have conversations with your father so he could change his mind. You prayed that he could understand that daughters and sons have the same right toward an education. Gradually, your father understood that girls are not inferior to boys.

After graduation, you went to work. Then, your superiors looked down on educated and professional women. Again, you sought God’s wisdom to resist the pressure and communicate with your superiors to measure the performance of women and men without gender bias. You realized that it is a long path until gender discrimination is over; still, you do not give up and try your best to convey that women and men have equal rights.

*(Silence)*

**Response hymn (speak or play music): “I have heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, I have heard about your love toward all the saints. I have not stopped giving thanks for you, and remembering you in my prayers.”**

#### **Woman 4**

Dear Sister Pearl

As a hospital cleaner on the frontline during the COVID-19 pandemic, you risked your life to clean and sanitize patient rooms in the hospital. You could not go home after work, for you did not want to risk infecting your three young children. Struggling on meagre incomes, you still needed to rent a room and live there to minimize contamination risks. During self-isolation, you could not take care of your family, so you felt frustrated and lonely. I am so impressed by the sacrifices you made and pray for you earnestly, hoping that the Lord of my life will also be your strength.

*(Silence)*

**Response hymn (speak or play music): “I have heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, I have heard about your love toward all the saints. I have not stopped giving thanks for you, and remembering you in my prayers.”**

#### **Woman 5**

Dear Sister Daiken

I constantly thank God for your recovery from the pain caused by the verbal and sexual abuse you suffered when you were little. The unendurable suffering led you to question yourself - *Do I deserve love?* Then a teacher came to your rescue when you were at the age of 14. You have found support from the social workers and people who cared about you. Through them, you experienced God’s love; you became a follower of Christ.

Though suffering a painful past, you refused to be silent. You revealed your stories by writing and painting. You want to encourage women who have suffered mental and physical abuses to trust in Our Saviour, to defy all the negative labels, and to create new images. Now you are a mother of two children, and you have become a blessing to them and other people.

*(Silence)*

**Response hymn (speak or play music): “I have heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, I have heard about your love toward all the saints. I have not stopped giving thanks for you, and remembering you in my prayers.”**

**Response Prayer:**

**All: Merciful God, we come to you in our prayers like the faithful women in the letters who told you of their struggles and hopes. They were not defeated by the difficulties but empowered by your wisdom. We are not alone, for you are listening. We thank you for your presence, guidance, and protection as we walk through the valley of shadows. May we glorify you and become a living testimony of Christ.**

*(Silence)*

**Offering**

**Leader 2:** The World Day of Prayer is an ecumenical movement led by women. The offering is part of our common vision to improve the lives of women and children around the world. We dedicate the offering to this ministry of prayerful action.

**The congregation stands and sings:**

**Hymn:** “Take My Gifts” Alleluia Aotearoa 127 © Words Shirley Erena Murray, Music Colin Gibson. Used with permission

Take my gifts and let me love you,  
God who first of all loved me,  
gave me light and food and shelter,  
gave me life and set me free.  
Now because your love has touched me,  
I have love to give away,  
now the bread of love is rising,  
loaves of love to multiply!

Take whatever I can offer--  
gifts that I have yet to find,  
skills that I am slow to sharpen,  
talents of the hand and mind,  
things made beautiful for others  
in the place where I must be:  
take my gifts and let me love you,  
God who first of all loved me.

**Our offerings this year will support:**

**Christian World Service** – Developers Foundation working with poor rural families in the Aklan Province of Philippines and Gender inequalities and COVID-19 – The Women’s Centre – Sri Lanka.

The **Bible Society** ‘Beacon in the darkness of illiteracy’ project to provide literacy classes for impoverished, illiterate Christian women in Pakistan.

**Interchurch Council for Hospital Chaplaincy** in New Zealand.

Options for Offering:

- Donate today during the Service
- If **banking** your offering – World Day of Prayer account details are:  
Westpac – Account number – 03-1700-0423420-25

*Please ensure the following details are recorded on your deposit:*

- **Group:** WDP Group Name / WDP Group No./ WDP2023
- **Individual:** (Your) Name / WDP2023

## **Intercessory Prayer**

### **Leader 1:**

Merciful God, Taiwan has been caught in a superpower struggle. It has been isolated internationally for decades. Though not officially recognised by the international community, Taiwan has tried its best to help the world in agriculture, technology, medicine, and humanitarian assistance.

O Holy Spirit, may you grant people in Taiwan strength and wisdom to cope with the uncertain future. We trust in you for Taiwan to be a blessing in the world. Divine Consoler, you are the Lord of the world; we cling to you, we give ourselves and Taiwan to you, and ask you to watch over us in our weakness. You are our fortress and place of safety.

### **Leader 2:**

Dear God of Creation, we thank you for entrusting us with this amazing world rich in natural resources. However, we ignore the cry of Mother Earth, and we are facing ecological problems, such as air and water pollution, a waste disposal crisis, over-utilization of hillsides, habitat destruction, and climate change. God of life may your kindness fill our hearts; guide us to protect Mother Earth.

### **Leader 1:**

Loving God, you created us in your own image and blessed us. You saw that it was good. We pray for women and girls who bring love and justice into the world. Holy Spirit, please give us wisdom to fight for the marginalized and the oppressed, the poor and helpless; give us

courage to speak up for them and inspire leaders to create a safer place for women and girls.

**Leader 2:**

Gracious God, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a great challenge. We pray for the ones who lost their loved ones, and the ones who did not find relief for their suffering. There are so many victims of the pandemic. God, empower us to help and bring comfort in a post-COVID-19 pandemic world.

Gracious God, we thank you for your good guidance during the pandemic outbreak in 2020, when under severe circumstances, WDP Taiwan prepared this worship service we are celebrating now in 2023.

Caring God, we thank you for granting World Day of Prayer the grace to stay together in your presence and have faith in you.

We are grateful for the effort of WDP women in Taiwan to overcome their differences and seek unity and consensus through God's grace. O Lord, may you guide us toward the path of unity in Christ.

**The Lord's Prayer – In Your Mother Tongue**

**Sending and Benediction**

**ALL: May God hear our stories and keep us in faith. May Jesus grant us wisdom to truly know the meaning of redemption. May the Holy Spirit open our hearts so that we can be a blessing to others. Amen!**

**SONG 7:** ‘The day you gave us Lord, has ended.’ (John Ellerton, 1870. Tune: Clement C Scholefield, 1874)

(or: as adapted for a daytime service by Pat McQuillan, Auckland, 2016)

1. This day you gave us, Lord, is passing,  
and night will fall at your behest;  
to you our morning hymns are rising,  
your praise shall sanctify our rest.

2. We thank you that your church unsleeping  
while earth rolls onward into light,  
through all the world her watch is keeping,  
and rests not now by day or night.
3. Across each continent and island  
as dawn leads on another day,  
the voice of prayer is never silent,  
nor dies the strain of praise away.
4. When we're at rest the sun is waking  
our friends beneath the western sky,  
and hour by hour fresh lips are making  
your wondrous doings heard on high.
5. So be it Lord; your throne shall never,  
like earth's proud empires, pass away;  
your kingdom stands, and grows for ever,  
till all your creatures own your sway.

## **Postlude: Taiwanese Music**

---

Copyright © 2021 World Day of Prayer International Committee, Inc.

“I Have Heard About Your Faith” was prepared by the World Day of Prayer Committee of Taiwan for the worship service and educational activities for the 2023 World Day of Prayer (WDP) annual celebration. WDP materials are developed for the exclusive use of WDP programmes organised by national or local committees and their partner organizations. For any other use, materials from the WDP 2023 Resource Packet may not be reproduced without the permission of World Day of Prayer International Committee (WDPIC).



*Limited reproduction rights granted*—Bible study, Worship Service, Country Background, Children’s Programme, Artwork and Artist Statement, WDP composed songs and photos may be reproduced—printed or electronically—for WDP activities with congregations and groups, if appropriate credit is given. WDP National/Regional Committees are permitted to resell reproductions of the resources for the purposes of the WDP programme.

The songs suggested for the worship service and children’s programme include copyrighted information from the publishers. Permission to reproduce or translate the copyrighted songs was given only for the use of WDP Taiwan 2023.

Only WDP National/Regional Committees connected with WDPIC can make the resource packet or sections of the materials available online. Committees that make materials available online must ensure groups and individuals who access the online materials are accountable to the committee.

Any offerings or funds collected related to WDP activities must be reported to WDP committees.

Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. and are used by permission. All rights reserved.

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>

## **BIBLE STUDY – Ephesians 1:15 – 19**

### **“I Have Heard About Your Faith”**

#### **Context –**

During the first century Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province of Asia and a major port. The Ephesians primarily worshipped Artemis, the Greek goddess of the hunt and fertility and protector of young girls. The livelihood of many depended on the Temple of Artemis. When Paul brought the gospel to Ephesus many believed in Jesus and followed Him wholeheartedly, although this meant a loss of wealth and status and also heavy pressure from family and friends. Despite this, the Ephesian believers kept the faith and this encouraged Paul greatly.

#### **Questions for Group Discussion**

1. What did it mean for Ephesian Christians in their context to demonstrate faith in Jesus? (See also Acts 19)
2. How can we live out our faith now in New Zealand?
3. Give examples of how you have been encouraged by the faith of other Christians.
4. How can we encourage each other to remain faithful especially in difficult times?

#### **Application**

Send cards or letters to those special to you encouraging them to uphold their faith and/or thanking them that their faith has been an encouragement to you.

*The complete Bible Study can be found on the World Day of Prayer website – [www.worlddayofprayer.org.nz](http://www.worlddayofprayer.org.nz)*

## Country Background Information

Taiwan is an island country measuring approximately 36,000 square kilometres, located in the Western Pacific region and in the centre of the East and Southeast Asia Island Arcs. It is composed of the main island and many offshore islands, including the Penghu Islands, Kinmen, the Matsu Islands, and over 100 other islands and skerries<sup>1</sup>. Two-thirds of the main island's terrain is mountain forest. Taiwan's tallest mountain—Yu Shan (also known as Jade Mountain)—approaches 4,000 meters in height and is the tallest summit in Northeast Asia. There are nine national parks in Taiwan.

Because of its location in the Ring of Fire, Taiwan and its surrounding islands experience approximately 1,000 felt earthquakes each year. A major earthquake with a magnitude of 7.3 occurred on September 21, 1999, in Central Taiwan (also known as the 921 Earthquake) and was the most disastrous in recent history with more than 13,000 casualties and missing people. While causing damage, earthquakes in Taiwan have also brought about a valuable underground resource, namely geothermally heated groundwater. Hot and cold springs containing different levels of various minerals can be found throughout the country, even in rivers and oceans.

Taiwan lies where the tropical monsoon and the subtropical monsoon meet. The unique island geography and climate conditions have resulted in the considerable diversity of animal and plant species.

The forests host over 250,000 species that make up 3.8% of all the species in the world. Furthermore, Taiwan has a high proportion of endemic species, with 64% of mammals and 13% of avian species. Unfortunately, some are listed as endangered species.

### People

With an approximate population of 23.6 million people, Taiwan is a densely populated multi-ethnic country with a majority of its population made up by descendants of immigrants from China during the Ming and Qing dynasties.

Prior to the influx of immigrants, Taiwan was home to the Austronesian people. The Austronesian people, who have lived on the island for at least 6,000 years, are generally categorized into two groups—the plains

---

<sup>1</sup> Rocky inlet or reef

indigenous people<sup>2</sup> and the officially recognised indigenous people<sup>3</sup>. Because of colonisation, the plains indigenous people who originally resided in northern and western Taiwan have been assimilated over the years. While there has been much effort made over the past three decades to revive the language and culture of the plains indigenous people, it has proven to be difficult to retrieve what has already been lost. The 16 officially recognised indigenous groups that still retain their languages and cultures amount to approximately 570,000 people, or 2% of the general population. The largest indigenous group with approximately 220,000 people is the Amis.

The Minnan people and the Hakka who emigrated from the south eastern coastal areas of the Great Qing Empire in the 17th century make up the majority of the population in Taiwan. Moreover, there are also those who migrated from all over China after World War II.

Taiwan is essentially a multilingual society. Mandarin, whose use was enforced by the government through a “National Language Movement” starting in 1946, is the most commonly used language. The National Language Movement, which lasted for more than 40 years, prohibited the use of other languages and dialects at schools and made Mandarin the major language on public occasions and for the media.

## History

Ancient ruins in eastern Taiwan dated approximately 50,000 years ago prove that there have been human activities since ancient times. The earliest human fossil found in Taiwan is that of Tso-chen Man dated about 20,000 years ago. In the 16th century, a Portuguese commercial ship sailed by the then forest island. Out of excitement, the sailors on the ship exclaimed, “Ilha Formosa”, which means a “beautiful island”.

Because of Taiwan’s advantageous location for maritime trade, the Dutch set foot on southern Taiwan in 1624. Shortly after that, the Spanish occupied northern Taiwan. The two factions competed against each other in commerce and colonisation. After the Dutch drove away the Spanish, they used Taiwan

---

<sup>2</sup> A list of plains indigenous groups in Taiwan: Kavalan, Ketagalan, Taokas, Pazeh, Papora, Babuza, Hoanya, Siraya, and Makatau.

<sup>3</sup> A list of 16 officially recognised indigenous groups: Pinuyumayan, Amis/Pangcah, Atayal, Saisiyat, Bunun, Tsou, Thao, Paiwan, Rukai, Tao, Kavalan, Truku, Sakizaya, Sediq, Hla’alua, and Kanakanavu. Specifically, Kavalan is one of the extreme few plains indigenous ethnic groups that still exist and the only one that is officially recognised by the Taiwanese government.

as the distribution centre for their international trade exporting rice, sugar, deer leather, and spices to various regions in East Asia.

Subsequently, a Ming dynasty loyalist named Cheng Cheng-Kung—also known as Koxinga—from the Great Ming Empire drove away the Dutch in 1662. He and his descendants founded the Kingdom of Tungning in Taiwan. The Koxinga family's regime in Taiwan lasted for a little over two decades before the Great Qing Empire took over the island.

In 1895, the Qing Empire ceded Taiwan to Japan under the Treaty of Shimonoseki, starting the 50-year period of Japanese rule. The Japanese initiated Taiwan's modernization through infrastructure, setting up systems for water, electricity, public roads, and the railroad. They also introduced western education to Taiwan. As a result, Taiwanese living conditions and quality of life significantly improved. However, because the Japanese government adopted national assimilation as their colonisation policy, the Taiwanese were discriminated against and received unfair treatment in many aspects. Nevertheless, the Catholic Church and the Presbyterian Church were allowed to continue their ministries. At the same time, with the immigration of Japanese nationals, other Christian denominations, such as the Japanese Christian Church, the Anglican Church in Japan, the Holiness Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Salvation Army also began their ministries in Taiwan.

The Japanese were defeated in the summer of 1945, effectively putting World War II and the Japanese rule in Taiwan to an end. Afterwards, Taiwan was placed under the administrative control of the government of the Republic of China ("ROC") on behalf of the Allied forces.

Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of the Chinese nationalist party (known as the Kuomintang, or KMT) and the ROC government lost the civil war in China to the Chinese Communist Party and fled to Taiwan in 1949 with over 1 million Chinese nationals. The post war depression and the influx of immigrants caused unrest in the Taiwanese society. In response, the Chiang regime imposed martial law that lasted for as long as 38 years. During such time, with the help of the international community, including the United States' financial aid, the World Health Organization's medical aid, and the loans from World Bank, and with the implementation of sophisticated economic infrastructure plans, Taiwan's economy gradually thrived, earning it a place among the "Four Asian Tigers". However, in exchange for these economic achievements, Taiwan sacrificed its civil freedom, democracy, human rights, and environmental protection.

The key to the progress of democracy in Taiwan is the people's participation. In 1979, anti-KMT activists' actions of calling for freedom, democracy, and the lifting of political party bans and martial law led to violent suppression, mass arrests, and court martials of civilians.

In 2004, Taiwan held its first referendum. In 2014, several courageous college students and civil organizations occupied the Legislature's meeting hall in protest of the government's attempt to sign a trade agreement with China that would infringe upon Taiwan's sovereignty. The younger generation's concern about public affairs has become a crucial force in Taiwan's democratic progress in recent years.

### **Economy**

The service industry possesses the largest portion of Taiwan's workforce. In 2020, Taiwan's GDP was worth over \$6690 billion U.S. dollars with the average income per capita at \$24,471 U.S. dollars. High-tech industries include core technologies such as Wafer Foundry, Integrated Circuits, the Internet of Things, and Artificial Intelligence.

Its agricultural products are comprised mainly of flowers, fruits, organic farming, and other products from quality agriculture. Taiwan's labour force relies heavily on migrant workers who mainly come from Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand and Indonesia and contribute to manufacturing, offshore fishing, and the home care industry. During the early years of its economic prosperity, Taiwan ignored the importance of environmental protection as industrial factories replaced forestlands and produced polluted air and water into the environment. However, as Taiwan progressed, the prior exploitation of the natural environment and industrial pollution that came with the pursuit of economic development had to be addressed. Therefore, the Taiwanese society has since committed to recycling with the second highest recycling rate in the world.

### **Religions**

Being a society of immigrants, with the Constitution protecting the basic human rights to freedom of religion, the diversity in religion in Taiwan ranks second in the world, and its religious freedom shares first place with Belgium and The Netherlands.<sup>4</sup> Besides the popular folk religions, the Taiwanese also

---

<sup>4</sup> According to a report published in 2014 by Pew Research Center's Religion and Public Life Project, Taiwan is second only to Singapore in the Religion Diversity

practise various religions, such as Buddhism (19.9%), Taoism (16.6%), Protestantism (5%), Catholicism (1.5%), Islam (0.2%), and a small number of Judaism and Greek Orthodox.

On the other hand, religions of the indigenous people and new immigrants differ from that of the mainstream Taiwanese population. Before their first interaction with Christianity, the indigenous people had already established their own faith system.

Christianity was first introduced to Taiwan during the Dutch and the Spanish occupation. The Spanish built Catholic churches in northern Taiwan while the Dutch brought in the Protestant Reformed Church to the south.

After Koxinga drove away the Dutch, Christianity was banned in Taiwan until mid-19th century when it was once again brought to Taiwan as the Dominican Order from the Philippines started to evangelize in southern Taiwan. In the meantime, the English Presbyterian Mission and the Canadian Presbyterian Mission also sent missionaries who started their ministries in southern and northern Taiwan, respectively.

Due to persecution by the Chinese Communist Party in the 1950s, Christian churches such as Anglicans, Methodists, the Baptist Church, and the Lutheran Church in China fled to Taiwan and started their ministries.

Interactions among denominations grew increasingly and actively, leading to the establishment of the National Council of Churches in Taiwan (“NCCT”) in 1963.

### Culture

The three most important holidays in Taiwan are the Spring Festival, the Dragon Boat Festival, and the Moon Festival.

The Spring Festival is commonly known as the Lunar New Year when people have approximately one week of holidays.

To celebrate the Dragon Boat Festival, the Taiwanese eat zongzi (rice dumplings) and compete in dragon boat races. At the Moon Festival, people

---

Index. The reference to religious freedom is based on the Humanists International’s Freedom of Thought Report in 2018.

eat mooncakes and pomelos while enjoying the sight of the mid-Autumn bright full moon.

The lives of indigenous people in Taiwan are inseparable from Mother Nature, so much so that a unique tribal culture that greatly differs from the mainstream culture has been cultivated. The Bununs and Atayals who make their living in the mountains, the Amis who live by the waters and the Tao islanders have all developed very different hunting or fishing cultures.

The Taiwanese people are of a warm nature. People often greet each other by asking, “Have you eaten yet?” There is a rich and diversified diet culture in Taiwan with rice as the staple food. Different ethnic cuisines from Taiwanese, Hakka, indigenous people, mainlanders and new immigrants can be found easily.

### **Medical Care**

With economic growth and popularization of education, the Taiwanese society increasingly values the importance of healthcare. Through years of developing advanced medical equipment and training professional medical care workers, the average life expectancy of the Taiwanese population reached 80.7 years by 2018, with men expecting to live for 77.5 years and women 84 years. The National Health Insurance was established in 1995. The insurance welfare policy mandated that all nationals, including foreign nationals that possess legal working permits, must participate irrespective of age.

Because of China’s interference in and infringement of Taiwan’s participation in international organizations, Taiwan has long been excluded by WHO and isolated from the global public health system. During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Taiwan implemented early deployment, border controls, and export bans on surgical masks. Through the requisition and allocation of surgical masks and the donation of over tens of millions of surgical masks to countries that were hit badly by COVID-19, the slogan “Taiwan Can Help” received acknowledgement from many foreign governments. Through bilateral and multilateral frameworks, Taiwan has battled this pandemic along with the international community.

### **Education**

Taiwan adopted modern western compulsory education at the turn of the 20th century. Since the implementation of nine-year compulsory education in



1968, boys and girls between the age of 7 and 15 had been required to attend school. As a result of universal education, the literacy rate among Taiwanese individuals above the age of 15 had reached 99% by 2019. Beginning in 2019, compulsory education was extended to 12 years.

Taiwan's Constitution mandates that women have equal rights for education, and women's potential in the workplace has increased thereafter. English is a mandatory subject for second language learning in Taiwan.

In recent years, the importance of preserving mother languages and protecting a culture with diverse languages has been recognised. Since 2001, elementary schools have made mother tongue a mandatory subject, and students have had an opportunity to study their own mother languages.

### Women

With the development of Taiwan's civil society founded upon the values of democracy, equality, and freedom, Taiwanese women in the 21st century now have the same rights as men do in politics, economic participation, and education. Under the mainstream patriarchal society of the early years, women were only able to participate in politics through guaranteed seats in public office that provided limited opportunities. However, with the lifting of martial law in Taiwan and feminist advocacy, the proportions of women participating in politics have surpassed the guaranteed seats. Under consideration of gender equality, the discriminating "guarantee system" was changed into the "principles of gender proportion" in 1999 to encourage more women to take part in politics. At 42%, the proportion of women in legislature is the highest in Asia.

Taiwanese women enjoyed the right to vote as early as 1949. Through the efforts of women's rights movements in the 1960s, the Taiwanese society came to understand and support gender equality and enacted relevant legislations. The Taiwanese government ratified the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* ("CEDAW") in 2012, and its effort in implementing CEDAW has earned international recognition.

In 2020, the first female moderator of Presbyterian Church Taiwan's general assembly was elected making her the first female church leader at the national level.

## **The History and Current State of WDP in Taiwan**

The earliest record of Taiwan church women’s participation in the World Day of Prayer dates back to March 1935 in the Taiwan Church Press. There was no national committee from the outset. Instead, the movement was promoted by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT)’s Northern and Southern Women’s Mission Societies. The Northern Women’s Mission Society contacted other Christian denominations to assemble a WDP worship service in 1958, and since then, PCT women have overseen the invitations to other denominations.

The full version of the country backgrounder can be found on the World Day of Prayer website. <https://www.worlddayofprayer.org.nz/>

## **DISTRIBUTION OF 2022 OFFERINGS**

### **Christian World Service**

The Human Rights Advocacy and Research Foundation (HRF) project based in Chennai (India) but working in the wider district. \$10,000

### **Bible Society**

Empowering Widows and Suffering Women of India Project working through its 17 auxiliaries in the wider district and partnering with churches and Christian organisations. \$10,000

**Interchurch Hospital Chaplaincy** \$5,500

**Church Women United Aotearoa NZ** \$500

**WDP International Committee** \$3,500

**WDPANZ Travel Fund** \$1,000

**WDPANZ Provision for Expenses** \$20,000

### **Future Themes and Countries**

**2024 “I Beg You ... Bear With One Another in Love” – Palestine**

**2025 “I Made You Wonderful” – Cook Islands**

**2026 “I Will Give You Rest: Come” – Nigeria**

**2027 United in Prayer for Peace and Justice – World Day of Prayer International Committee**



## **WORLD DAY OF PRAYER**

Observed on the first Friday in March each year,  
is a worldwide movement of informed prayer  
involving people of many denominations and languages  
in more than 170 countries.

Each year the service is written  
by women in a different country  
who share the hopes and fears, joys and sorrows,  
opportunities and needs, of their country.

It affirms that informed prayer  
and prayerful action are inseparable.



The **World Day of Prayer logo** depicts  
a cross, formed by praying figures  
from the four corners of the earth,  
joined together within the circle of the world.

World Day of Prayer is sponsored by an International Committee  
and organised by a National Committee in each country.

### **World Day of Prayer Aotearoa New Zealand National Committee 2023**

National Liaison Officer, Zella McGirr (Roman Catholic)

Pauline McKay (Chairperson)

Mary Caldwell (Roman Catholic)

Cornelia Grant (Theological Advisor)

Stephanie Johnston (Anglican)

Sheila Nokes (Presbyterian)

Lynne Scott (Methodist)

Roz Wilkie (Methodist)

Website: [www.worlddayofprayer.co.nz](http://www.worlddayofprayer.co.nz)

Email: [wdpnz@xtra.co.nz](mailto:wdpnz@xtra.co.nz)

PO Box 8452 Riccarton Christchurch 8440