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# UNIVERSAL DAY OF PRAYER FOR STUDENTS

Justice, Resilience and Faith:  
Strength in Times of Crisis

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## Justice, Resilience and Faith: Strength in Times of Crisis

# UDPS 2025 1 INTRODUCTION

The Universal Day of Prayer for Students (UDPS) is a moment when students, church leaders, and faith communities around the world come together in prayer, reaffirming our common hope in Christ. Since 1898, this ecumenical tradition has united students in different contexts, giving them space to reflect on their faith, express solidarity, and commit to action.

This year, as we observe UDPS 2025, we do so in the shadow of conflict, displacement, and uncertainty, particularly in the Middle East, where war and crisis have deeply affected communities. The reality of war, economic instability, and the suffering of many young people call us to reflect on the meaning of faith and resilience. In times of darkness, faith becomes a source of collective strength, and resilience allows us to endure, rebuild, and remain steadfast in our mission as students and believers.

Theme for UDPS 2025: "Resilience and Faith: Strength in Times of Crisis". It is rooted in the belief that faith sustains us through adversity. Just as Jesus calmed the storm (Mark 4:39) and reminded his disciples not to be afraid, we too are called to trust in God's presence, even when the world around us feels uncertain. Faith does not erase suffering, but it strengthens our ability to persevere, to stand in solidarity with others, and to transform pain into hope.

WSCF invites students and communities worldwide to engage in a time of prayer, reflection, and action. This year's UDPS will serve as a reminder that, despite the struggles we face, we

are called to hold onto faith and be a source of light for others.

### **The Role of Students in Upholding Faith During War and Displacement**

Students have always been at the heart of faith movements, standing for justice, peace, and unity in times of crisis. Across the world, students face war, displacement, persecution, and economic hardship, yet they continue to offer hope and resilience through their faith and actions.

In conflict zones, disaster-stricken areas, and regions of social injustice, students are leading acts of service, interfaith dialogue, and reconciliation, proving that unity is possible even in difficult circumstances.

This year's UDPS is dedicated to all students worldwide who, despite hardship, remain committed to knowledge, truth, and justice. Their faith is a testimony that, even in suffering, God's love endures.

### **A Time to Reflect, Pray, and Act**

This liturgical resource offers a structured guide for prayer services, Bible study, and reflections, allowing individuals and communities to participate in UDPS 2025 in a way that resonates with their local realities. Whether gathered in churches, student movements, or personal spaces, we encourage all participants to use this time to:

- Reflect on the power of faith and resilience in times of crisis.
- Pray for students facing war, displacement, and hardship.
- Commit to actions of solidarity, peacebuilding, and reconciliation.

May this UDPS be a time when we, as the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), stand together in prayer, trusting that God's love is greater than any storm.



# 2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Universal Day of Prayer for Students (UDPS) is one of the oldest ecumenical traditions of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF). It was first celebrated on February 13, 1898, during the second meeting of the General Committee of WSCF. The founding members of WSCF believed that prayer should be at the heart of their global movement, creating a spiritual bond between students worldwide, despite their different cultural and denominational backgrounds.

From its inception, UDPS was designed as a day for students to gather in prayer, intercede for one another, and seek God's guidance in their academic, social, and spiritual lives. It was also a reminder that students, as part of the larger Christian community, have a role to play in transforming the world through faith and action.

During moments of war, persecution, and social upheaval, UDPS has remained a sign of Christian unity across regions and traditions. It has served as a spiritual anchor for students who have faced challenges such as conflict, displacement, and oppression. During UDPS, students reaffirm their commitment to justice, peace, and reconciliation, standing together in faith despite the hardships they endure.

During times of war, persecution, and social upheaval, UDPS has remained a symbol of Christian unity, with justice as its foundation. For example, during the Second World War, students across Europe gathered in secret to pray and support one another despite the dangers they faced, offering hope to those experiencing conflict, displacement, and injustice.. Today, as students continue to face persecution and war, UDPS calls us not only to pray but also to demonstrate resilience and actively live out their faith through concrete acts of justice and solidarity.

## “Justice, Resilience, and Faith: Strength in Times of Crisis”

This year's theme reflects a global reality that students face across different regions. Throughout history, Christian students have turned to their faith for strength amid wars, political struggles, economic crises, and displacement. This theme serves as a spiritual and practical call to remain steadfast in faith, trusting that God sustains us even in the darkest moments and calls us to act justly in the world.

This theme is not only relevant to students in the Middle East, where war, political instability, and displacement have profoundly affected daily life, but also to students across the globe who experience crises of different kinds—natural disasters, social injustice, economic hardship, or religious persecution. Justice, resilience, and faith are interconnected; faith strengthens resilience, and resilience fuels the pursuit of justice. UDPS 2025 invites all students to reflect on how their faith sustains them and inspires them to work for justice, even in the most challenging circumstances.

Just as past generations of Christian students have drawn strength from their faith in times of war, oppression, and uncertainty, we too are called to do the same. May our prayers unite us, empower us, and guide us in building a future of hope, peace, and justice.



# 3 SUGGESTED PREPARATIONS FOR UDPS 2025

## Organizing the Service: Appointing Leaders and Readers

A well-organized service requires careful planning and delegation of responsibilities. Here are the key roles to assign:

- **Service Leader (or Worship Coordinator):** Oversees the entire UDPS service, ensuring that the program follows the liturgical order provided in this guide. Introduces the theme: “Resilience and Faith: Strength in Times of Crisis”.
- **Readers for Biblical Passages:** Selects individuals to read key scripture passages that reflect the theme of faith and resilience. Encourages diversity by including students from different denominations and traditions.
- **Prayer Leaders:** Guide the Prayers of Intercession, allowing moments for silent prayer and reflection. Invite participants to offer personal or spontaneous prayers related to the challenges faced by students in their contexts.
- **Music Team:** Leads the congregation in songs and hymns that reflect the themes of faith, endurance, and hope. If possible, include songs from different Christian traditions to enhance the ecumenical experience.
- **Symbolic Actions Coordinator (Optional):** Organizes creative elements such as candle lighting, sharing testimonies, or other interactive acts of prayer. Ensures that the symbols used align with local culture and worship traditions.

## Adapting the Liturgy to Local Contexts and Traditions

Since WSCF is a global movement, UDPS is observed in many different cultural and denominational contexts. Local student movements are encouraged to adapt the liturgy in ways that are meaningful to their communities.

Ways to Adapt the Liturgy:

- **Use Local Languages:** Read prayers and scripture in the languages spoken by participants, making sure that all feel included.
- **Incorporate Local Worship Styles:** Whether in the form of Orthodox chants, Protestant hymns, or Catholic liturgical responses, choose elements that resonate with participants' spiritual traditions.
- **Reflect the Social Context:** Encourage testimonies from students who have experienced war, displacement, or economic hardships. These personal reflections help connect the theme to real-life struggles.
- **Consider Different Worship Settings:** In some places, UDPS will be held in churches or chapels. In others, it might be more accessible in university halls, student dormitories, or even outdoors. Virtual services can be an option where in-person gatherings are not possible.

## Creative and Symbolic Acts to Highlight the Theme

To reinforce the theme “Justice, Resilience and Faith: Strength in Times of Crisis,” consider incorporating meaningful rituals and symbolic acts into the service.

Recommended Symbolic Actions:

- **Lighting Candles for Hope:** Invite each participant to light a candle as a symbol of faith overcoming darkness. Candles can represent specific prayer intentions (e.g., for students affected by war, for peace, for healing, etc.).
- **Sharing Testimonies of Resilience:** Students who have overcome hardship (conflict, displacement, or personal struggles) can share how their faith sustained them. This can be done live or through written testimonies read aloud.
- **Washing of Hands or Feet (Inspired by John 13:14-15):** A symbolic act of servanthood and solidarity, reminding students of the call to support one another during difficult times. This can be modified to hand washing or anointing with oil for cultural and logistical reasons.
- **Carrying Stones or Crosses as Symbols of Burdens:** Participants can hold a stone or a wooden cross while reflecting on the burdens students carry. At the end of the service, they can place them at the altar or a prayer station as a sign of surrendering their struggles to God.



- **Writing Prayers on Paper or Fabric Strips:** Encourage students to write short prayers and tie them to a cross, a prayer tree, or a wall of lamentation. This creates a visual representation of collective prayer and solidarity.

### Recommended Songs, Prayers, and Reflections

Music and prayers play a crucial role in creating an atmosphere of contemplation and spiritual connection. Below are suggestions that fit the theme.

#### Songs and Hymns:

- “Be Thou My Vision” (Traditional hymn – trust in God’s guidance)
- “You Are My Refuge” (Taizé chant – seeking protection in God)
- “On Christ the Solid Rock I Stand” (Protestant hymn – faith in times of crisis)
- “Lord Have Mercy” (Kyrie Eleison) (Orthodox and Catholic tradition – prayer for mercy in difficult times)
- “Bless the Lord, My Soul” (Taizé – a song of hope and trust in God’s care)

#### Suggested Bible Readings on Resilience and Faith:

- Romans 12:12 – “Rejoice in hope, be patient in affliction, be constant in prayer.”
- Psalm 46:1-3 – “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”
- Isaiah 40:31 – “Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.”
- John 16:33 – “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

#### Closing Blessing or Benediction:

To conclude the UDPS 2025 service, a leader can offer a final blessing:

Leader: *May the God of all peace, who strengthens the weary and upholds the brokenhearted, grant us the resilience to endure, the faith to trust, and the courage to act. As we go forth from this time of prayer, may we carry hope into our communities and stand as beacons of light in the face of darkness. Amen.*



# 4 ORDER OF LITURGY

## **Prayers of Intercession for Students, Refugees, and the Oppressed:**

Leader: *God of life, in times of war and displacement, in times of sorrow and uncertainty, you remain our refuge and strength. You have called us to be steadfast in faith and to place our hope in you. As we gather in prayer, we lift our voices in intercession for all those who are suffering.*

Response (All): *Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

### **For Those Facing War and Conflict**

Reader 1: *God of peace, we pray for all who live under the shadow of war, especially the people of Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, Sudan, and all those experiencing violence and displacement. Strengthen those who remain faithful despite fear, and grant wisdom to those who seek justice and reconciliation.*

Response (All): *Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

### **For Refugees and the Displaced**

Reader 2: *God of the journey, your Son had no place to rest his head, and so many today are forced from their homes. Be with those seeking safety and shelter, especially students who long for education and stability. May they find communities that welcome them, and may we open our hearts to be places of refuge.*

Response (All): *Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

### **For Those Who Have Lost Hope**

Reader 3: *God of hope, in times of crisis, when all seems lost, you remind us that faith can move mountains. Be with students who feel overwhelmed, isolated, or abandoned. Rekindle in them the fire of your Spirit, that they may find strength in you and courage in one another.*

Response (All): *Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

### **For the Church as a Sign of Faith and Unity**

Reader 4: *God of unity, you have called your Church to be a light in the darkness. May Christians of all traditions stand together in times of suffering, offering love, support, and unwavering faith. Let our witness bring healing to our divided world.*

Response (All): *Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

### **For Students Called to Be Peacemakers**

Reader 5: *God of wisdom, you have given us the responsibility to be peacemakers in our communities. May students and young people be bold in their faith, resilient in their struggles, and compassionate in their service. Inspire us to speak truth, act justly, and love without fear.*

Response (All): *Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

### **For the Renewal of Our Faith**

Reader 6: *God of new beginnings, in every moment of hardship, you open a path toward hope. When we are weary, renew our strength. When we are fearful, deepen our trust. When we are divided, bring us together in your love.*

Response (All): *Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Leader: *God of all creation, you have heard the cries of your people. Let your presence be known in every place where suffering lingers, and may your Church continue to be a beacon of faith and resilience. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.*

All: *Amen.*



# 5 BIBLE STUDY MATERIALS FOR GROUP REFLECTIONS

Bible study is an essential part of UDPS, allowing students to reflect on justice, resilience, and faith in light of Scripture. The following materials are designed to guide group discussions, personal meditations, and collective prayers.

## Key Scripture Passages

The selected Bible passages highlight God's faithfulness in times of hardship and the call to remain steadfast in faith while pursuing justice:

- Romans 12:12 – "Rejoice in hope, be patient in affliction, be constant in prayer."
- Psalm 46:1-3 – "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."
- Isaiah 40:31 – "But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."
- Micah 6:8 – "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God."
- 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 – "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed."
- James 2:14-17 – Faith in action: "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds?"

These passages encourage students to trust in God's strength, seek justice, and remain resilient in the face of suffering.

## Discussion questions on faith, resilience, and action

To foster meaningful conversations, the following questions can guide Bible study groups:

- Faith and Resilience:
  - How do these passages show that faith can sustain us during crises?
  - In what ways has your faith given you strength during a personal or collective hardship?
- Justice and Hope:
  - What does it mean to "act justly" and "love mercy" in today's world? (Micah 6:8)
  - How can students contribute to justice in their communities while maintaining faith and resilience?
- Faith in Action:
  - James 2:14-17 reminds us that faith must be expressed through action. How can we put our faith into practice in situations of war, economic hardship, and displacement?
  - What are small, practical ways students can support each other and their wider communities in difficult times?
- Personal Reflection:
  - Can you share a moment when you felt God's presence in a time of crisis?
  - How can we encourage one another to hold onto faith, even when the future seems uncertain?

These discussion questions allow students to reflect deeply on their faith while engaging in meaningful dialogue about resilience and justice.

## Testimonies from students affected by war and conflict

Hearing real stories from students who have endured war, displacement, or hardship can strengthen faith and foster solidarity. Below are suggested ways to incorporate testimonies into Bible study sessions:

- Invite a Student to Share – If possible, include a student who has personally experienced conflict or hardship to share their story of resilience and faith.
- Read a Testimony – If a live testimony is not possible, read or watch a pre-recorded testimony from students who have lived through displacement, persecution, or economic crisis.
- Reflect and Respond – After listening to a testimony, ask:
  - What stood out to you in this story?
  - How does this testimony connect with the scripture passages we studied?
  - How can we support students facing similar challenges today?

By connecting Scripture with real experiences, students can see faith in action and be inspired to persevere in their own struggles while standing in solidarity with others.

# 6 CONTRIBUTIONS FROM MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRIES

The UDPS 2025 provides a space for students to share prayers, reflections, and testimonies rooted in their unique social and political realities. This section highlights contributions from students in the Middle East, where faith and resilience are deeply intertwined with everyday struggles for justice, peace, and dignity.



## **Lebanon: Holding onto faith amidst economic and political crises**

Lebanese students face one of the worst economic crises in recent history, with inflation, job loss, and social instability impacting daily life. Despite these hardships, student movements remain a beacon of hope, offering community support, prayer gatherings, and solidarity initiatives to help those in need.

**Prayer Focus:** That young people in Lebanon may find strength in God's presence and continue to be agents of change in their society.

**Reflection:** How can faith sustain us when economic and social systems fail?



## **Palestine: Spiritual resistance and hope under occupation and genocide**

In Gaza, students endure genocide, displacement, and destruction, while in the West Bank, they face occupation and criminalization. Yet, their faith remains a pillar of resilience. The Christian community, though small, stands firm in prayer, service, and advocacy for justice.

**Prayer Focus:** For students facing genocide and occupation, they may find peace and protection in God's love.

**Reflection:** What does it mean to trust in God when everything around us is unstable?



## **Egypt: The role of faith in fostering peace and coexistence**

Egyptian students play a key role in Christian-Muslim dialogue, promoting peaceful coexistence and social harmony in a diverse society. Christian student movements emphasize education, prayer, and community service as ways to strengthen interfaith relationships.

**Prayer Focus:** For unity among students of different faiths and backgrounds.

**Reflection:** How can faith help break barriers and build relationships across religious divides?



## **Jordan: Supporting displaced communities through faith and service**

Jordan hosts a large refugee population, including those fleeing war in Syria, Palestine, and Iraq. Student Christian groups work alongside churches and aid organizations to offer support, education, and spiritual encouragement to displaced communities.

**Prayer Focus:** That displaced students may find hope, opportunities, and a sense of belonging.

**Reflection:** How does faith inspire us to welcome and support the stranger?



## **Iraq: Rebuilding faith communities after war and destruction**

The Christian community in Iraq has suffered war, displacement, and persecution, yet students continue to rebuild their communities, strengthen their faith, and advocate for their rights.

**Prayer Focus:** For the healing and restoration of Iraq's faith communities.

**Reflection:** How can faith help in the process of rebuilding after destruction?



## **Sudan: Faith as a source of strength in times of instability**

Sudanese students face political unrest, economic struggles, and human rights violations. Churches and student movements provide spiritual and psychological support, ensuring that young people remain hopeful and active in shaping a better future.

**Prayer Focus:** That students in Sudan may be protected and empowered to work for justice and peace.

**Reflection:** What role does faith play in times of political crisis?



# 7 RESOURCES AND ANNEXES

## Ecumenical Prayers and Meditations

### Prayer for Justice and Resilience:

Lord, strengthen our hearts in times of trial.  
May we stand firm in faith, act justly, and be bearers of Your peace.  
Amen.

### Meditation on Hope:

"Even in darkness, faith shines as a light.  
May we trust in God's justice and work for peace."

## Liturgical Tools and Symbols

Candles – Symbolizing hope in crisis.  
Olive Branch/Cross – Representing peace and faith.  
Bowl of Water – A sign of renewal and service.  
Broken Chains – Symbolizing freedom and justice.

## Further Readings

### Bible Passages:

Romans 12:12 – Be patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.  
Micah 6:8 – Act justly, love mercy, walk humbly with God.  
Matthew 5:9 – Blessed are the peacemakers.

### Recommended Books:

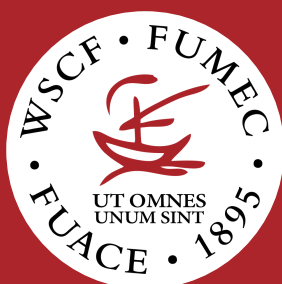
The Prophetic Imagination – Walter Brueggemann  
Strength to Love – Martin Luther King Jr.  
Fratelli Tutti – Pope Francis

## Call to Action

Support students affected by crisis through aid and advocacy.  
Join interfaith and justice initiatives in your community.  
Share UDPS reflections on social media (#UDPS2025).

## Final Words

Faith is not passive—it calls us to justice, resilience, and action.  
May this UDPS inspire us to stand firm, pray boldly, and work for peace.



## UDPS 2025 CREDITS:

This publication was prepared by the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) under the coordination of the WSCF IRO and WSCF -ME, with contributions from regional and national student movements worldwide.

Lead Author: Melissa Bridi – Youth Ecumenical Leadership Program Coordinator  
Design & Layout: Maria Camila Ulloa

[WWW.WSCF.CH](http://WWW.WSCF.CH)