



**World Day of Prayer 2026
Nigeria**

Welcome to the 2026 World Day of Prayer, this year we are focusing on Nigeria, the largest country in Africa.

Our theme, 'I will give you rest, come'. draws inspiration from Matthew 11:28. It serves as a heartfelt invitation from Jesus to all who are burdened and heavy-laden. And so, we are invited to come just as we are, bringing all that weighs us down so that we may find rest.

Christian women from Nigeria are calling out to us, wherever we are in the world, beckoning us to come and find rest for our souls. As we worship together, may we share each other's burdens and find renewed strength in our unity. May each of us find a sense of belonging here, as we are united in the embrace of Christ's love.

Song 861/Tune 132

In Christ Alone

1. In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song;
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All,
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

2. In Christ alone! who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe!
The gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save:
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied -
For every sin on Him was laid;
Here in the death of Christ I live.

3. There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious Day
Up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine -
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

4. No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the power of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand;
Till He returns or calls me home,
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand!
Stuart Townend and Keith Getty 2001

Facts and Figures

We'd like to share with you a few facts and figures about Nigeria, that have been sourced from the World Day of Prayer resources, Google and the Salvation Army Year Book.

Nigeria is a culturally rich country known for its diverse peoples.

Population 232.7 million people (as of 2024)

The National Language is English (Though over 500 languages are spoken)

Nigeria's Religions are Christianity, Islam, and indigenous beliefs.

The National Animal is the Black Crowned Crane, known for its distinctive golden crown of bristle feathers.

Cultural Significance - It is home to the second largest film industry on the globe. Nigeria is considered a hub for fashion, technology, and creativity in Africa.

The Salvation Army in Nigeria

214 Corps	159 Outposts
23,831 Soldiers	2163 Adherents

Song 616/Tune 427

O love that will not let me go

1. O love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee;
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in Thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

3. O Joy that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to Thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain
And feel the promise is not vain,
That morn shall tearless be.
George Matheson (1842-1906)

Responsive Prayer

Leader: Loving God, you welcome us here. We meet, trusting in your promise that you are always present. You are the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the origin and sustainer of our being, the one who bears our burdens and transforms us, the one to whom we bring our thanks, our adoration and our praise. We commit this time of worship to you.

All: As we open our hearts to the Holy Spirit, fill us with your presence, united in the Spirit to saturate the world with a wave of prayer and praise.

Leader: Where do we find hope in a burdened world?

All: Christ is our hope, who bears all of our burdens.

Leader: Where do we place our trust in uncertain times?

All: In the Lord, who is trustworthy, true, and who knows all things.

Leader: What can we do when we meet those who are tired and burdened?

All: As Christ bears our burdens, we can bear the burdens of another.

Leader: May we pray informed prayers.

All: May we walk in obedience and prayerful action.

Leader: The Lord is our strength, our hope and our light.

All: Let us rely on His strength, remain in His hope, and walk in His light, today and always.
Amen.

Bible reading

Matthew 11:28-30

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Mark 6:31

Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”

Introduction to stories

We are going to share four stories with you, from Nigerian women who have had the courage to tell their story. Following each story there is a prayer that we would like to invite you to pray too.

CHIOMA'S STORY: THE BURDEN OF INSECURITY

Chioma: My name is Chioma. Looking back, my early school days were not a happy time. I had loved nursery but once I got to big school I began to fall behind. My teachers said I wasn't good at anything and made me repeat a year. I felt so ashamed, and some so-called friends were cruel in their taunting. I worried that I would have to leave school as I knew my father would not keep paying my school fees if I wasn't learning — girls' education wasn't worth it he said. I was so unhappy I didn't know what to do.

Then my friends reminded me of Jesus and how prayer could help. One taught me a prayer that went like this 'God, I am your child, I am smart, I can learn and grow. Amen.'

I started to use that prayer, and I knew my friends were also praying for me. Things did begin to change. Teachers came alongside and helped me where I was failing. A light went on and it wasn't long before I caught up.

Do you know, I have used that prayer often in my life when I was struggling and shared it with others. How wonderful that even children can help bear one another's burdens and build each other's faith in Jesus.

Prayer

Compassionate God, we hear your invitation to come and find rest for our souls. We often shy away from your call, knowing that we have added to people's burdens by our selfish words or actions. Whatever our age, hurtful words and selfish actions can undermine people's confidence and lead to insecurity, injustice and hatred.

We are sorry for not living your best way for us. Grant forgiveness when we go astray and bring healing to those we have hurt. As we draw closer to you, fill our hearts with love for you, our neighbours and ourselves.

Thank you for your assurance of forgiveness. Help us to walk your way, giving hope and encouragement to others and bringing you glory.

God of the insecure, open our ears to hear, our hearts to feel and our minds to understand. You are the one who invites us to come and find rest.

Loving Jesus, you walked this earth and know what it is to be a child. Be with all children who struggle today, at home, in school and in situations beyond their control.

Holy Spirit, enable us to provide safe and secure environments for children to grow and flourish. Bring healing for all our hurtful memories.

Stir us to powerful, faithful prayer and unite us across continents in compassion and hope. Amen.

BEATRICE'S STORY: THE BURDEN OF MARGINALISATION

The day I lost my husband, I lost more than just my partner. I lost my place in society. Suddenly, I was alone with three young children, facing a world that seemed to have turned its back on me. There were days I didn't know how I'd feed my children or pay their school fees.

But in my darkest moments, I found strength in my faith and in the community of other widows. A support programme organised by my local church expected fifty widows to attend, but hundreds showed up. That day, I realised I was not alone in my struggles.

What has inspired me most is the resilience and faith of my fellow widows. Despite our hardships, many of us remain committed to Christ, finding solace in knowing Jesus as our Burden Bearer. I've seen young widows with small children serving tirelessly in the church, their faith unshaken by their circumstances.

One widow in our community started a programme to support other widows. She encouraged people to donate clothes, rice and money to help us. Her actions inspired me to do the same. Now, I use what little resources I have to support other widows, and together we're stronger. Through it all, we remain loyal to our families and the memory of our husbands. While bereaved men often remarry quickly, we focus on raising our children and keeping our families together. It's not an easy path but, with faith and community, we find the strength to carry on. Our burden is heavy, but we are learning to lay it at Jesus' feet, finding rest in his promise.

Prayer

God of the marginalised, we know that you see us. You see the discrimination faced by so many: those who are overworked; those exploited in factories, fields and homes; and those who cannot find work to feed their families. Thank you, Gracious God, for the resilience and resourcefulness of all who remain faithful amidst difficult circumstances. Inspire us by their example and move us to build a better world.

God of the marginalised, intervene for us all.

Loving Jesus, you welcomed the oppressed and lifted up the downtrodden. Today we see injustice everywhere and many suffer under oppressive systems. Speak to the hearts of all leaders, that they may govern with fairness and compassion. Move the hearts of communities to change their attitudes and actions towards all who are marginalised.

Loving Jesus, give us strength to keep trusting you, even when the burdens seem too heavy to bear.

Holy Spirit, fill us anew. Let your power overflow in our communities. Use us to be a blessing to others. May we be inspired by those who use their own struggles to bless those around them. Thank you for hearing our cries and bearing our burdens.

Holy Spirit, we trust in your unfailing love and your mighty power to transform. Amen.

JATO'S STORY: THE BURDEN OF RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

Every day when I send my 14-year-old daughter, Amina, to school, my heart tightens with worry. You see, Amina is the same age as Leah Sharibu was when she was taken, just a few hours from here.

In February 2018, Boko Haram kidnapped Leah Sharibu and 109 other girls from a secondary school in Dapchi. After negotiations, all girls were released except for Leah who refused to convert.

Leah's story haunts me: a young girl, steadfast in her faith, refusing to deny Christ even in the face of captivity. Every time I look at Amina, I can't help thinking, 'What if it had been her?'

When we pray together each morning before she goes to school, I remind her of Jesus' words: 'In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.' (John 16:33) Our strength doesn't come from an expectation of an easy life. Instead, it's rooted in the knowledge that Christ walks with us through every hardship.

Leah's story reminds me of the cost of my faith. But it also shows me its power. In Damaturu, a small Christian community still gathers to pray for Leah's return. Their hope, their persistent faith, inspires me to keep believing, to keep loving, to keep living alongside all my neighbours — Muslim and Christian alike.

As I watch Amina leave for school each day, I pray not only for her safety but also for her heart. I pray that she, like Leah, will have the strength to stand firm in her faith. But I also pray that she will have the love to see the image of God in everyone she meets, regardless of their faith.

This is how we find rest in God - not by harbouring hatred or intolerance, but by letting Christ's love flow through us, even in the face of persecution. It's a daily choice, a daily surrender. But in making this choice, we find that our burdens truly do become light, and, in God, we find our rest.

Prayer

God of the persecuted and protector of the faithful, we come before you with heavy hearts and confess the sins that tear at the fabric of our society: the intolerance that breeds fear, the hatred that fuels violence and the indifference that allows injustice to persist. Comfort those who live with the fear of losing loved ones, and change the hearts of the perpetrators, guiding them toward reconciliation.

God of Justice, we cry out against extremism which spreads violence. Break every chain that binds us and separates us from our neighbours. Touch the hearts of all, showing them the value of human life and the path to peace.

Loving Jesus, you too faced persecution. We lift up Leah Sharibu and all who suffer for their beliefs. Grant them strength and comfort in their darkest hours, inspiring us to stand strong in the face of adversity. Help us take up your yoke of love and forgiveness.

Loving Jesus, renew our minds and hearts, guiding us in righteousness, that we may honour you and bless others. We trust in your power to transform.

Holy Spirit, we cry out for those displaced by violence, forced to flee their homes and become refugees in unfamiliar lands. In the face of persecution, let us not simply await rescue; instead encourage us to actively live out our faith, knowing that each act of love and forgiveness is a testament to Christ's enduring power in our lives.

Holy Spirit, shelter under your wings all who are displaced, providing for their needs and guiding them toward safety and new beginnings. Amen.

BLESSING'S STORY: THE BURDENS OF POVERTY AND DESPAIR

I've seen Nigeria change over the years but not in the way we all hoped. We dreamed of progress, of a better life for our children, but instead we have watched our nation slide deeper into poverty and despair. The government seems focused on itself, not on us. We're a nation rich in resources but poor in leadership and hope.

Every day, I see the toll this takes on our minds and our spirits. It's like we're all trapped in a cycle of disappointment. We've been let down so many times that, even when good things come our way, we're afraid to believe in them. That's Nigeria now — we've stopped believing that things can get better.

But even in the midst of this despair, I see glimmers of light. I think of my neighbour, Grace. She lost her job and her husband the same year. She had every reason to give up, but instead, she started a small soap-making business. It's not much, but it keeps food on her table and her children in school.

Grace often tells me, 'Blessing, we are not just coping, we are living by faith.' Her words remind me that the Bible says that those who are cast down will be lifted up. (Job 22:29) So, we keep moving, keep believing that one day the storm will pass.

Prayer

God of the poor, we cry out to you to help families who are struggling to meet their basic needs. We give thanks and praise for the persistence of Blessing and Grace and all those who keep moving forward despite even the most difficult circumstances.

God, Giver of Life, continue to strengthen and comfort all who are weary from the burdens of life and direct the hearts of those who can help.

Loving Jesus, compassionate healer, we lift up those who live with poor mental health, often made worse by poverty, stress and daily life. Walk with them and show them that their lives have immeasurable value. Help us to create societies that respect and care for all.

Loving Jesus, you called us to come with all the burdens that weigh us down. Here we are! Help us to cast our cares on you and lighten these loads.

Holy Spirit, be our Comforter in times of distress. Grant us the faith to keep moving forward even when the path seems impossible. When we cannot see a way forward, be our guide.

Help us to be a light to others, sharing hope and extending a helping hand where we can. We trust in your promise that you will never leave us or forsake us. Amen.

Leaders Summary

These are the women's testimonies: that even in struggles, evidence of God's faithfulness can be found. They may be burdened, but they are not broken. They continue to work, to hope, to pray for the Nigeria they know is possible and pray for the world they know is possible.

As we leave this place, let us remember that God invites us to be co-workers in lifting each other's burdens. He invites to be a friend, be part of a community and have a voice to speak up for the right thing.

Song 1039/Tune 42 The Day Thou Gavest

1. The day Thou gavest, Lord, is ended,
The darkness falls at Thy behest;
To Thee our morning hymns ascended,
Thy praise shall sanctify our rest.

2. We thank Thee that Thy 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. As o'er each continent and island
The dawn leads on another day,
The voice of prayer is never silent,
Nor dies the strain of praise away.

4. The sun that bids us rest is waking
Our brethren 'neath the western sky,
And hour by hour fresh lips are making
Thy wondrous doings heard on high.

5. So be it, Lord; Thy throne shall never,
Like earth's proud empires, pass away;

Thy Kingdom stands, and grows forever,
Till all Thy creatures own Thy sway.
John Ellerton (1826-1893)

Benediction

Leader: And now, with you God, we look towards the future, trusting in your presence through the changing days. We pray that, as we love and serve our neighbours, the earth will ring with faith's increasing praise. May we go forth with the strength of Christ.

All: We go with faith, hope and love, to be your light in the world. Amen.