

International Women's Day 2020



A reflection

International Women's Day has its origin in the beginning of the 20th century. In 1909, women marched in New York City to campaign for better working rights and a voice in the public sphere. The next year, women from 17 countries walked for suffrage for women. In 1975, the United Nations began celebrating the contribution women made to the world and in 1977 proclaimed March 8 as the United Nations Day for Women's Rights and World Peace. Forty-three years on, we now celebrate International Women's Day as a time for solidarity and hope. Working in partnership with all members of our community, we are encouraged to celebrate women's contribution to our world and continue to shine light on the areas where women's voices and efforts are marginalized, suppressed and ignored.

In 2016 I travelled to the Holy Land as part of a study tour for ecumenical and interfaith dialogue. While I was there, my heart was enflamed by the courage and faithfulness of the many women from Palestine, Israel and Jordan who I met on my journey; women who were working for peace for their children, their brothers, sons and fathers, their grandchildren and their neighbours. A profound moment I had was meeting Claire Anastas who owns a small souvenir shop which once thrived on the busy Hebron Rd and now sits quietly behind the wall constructed to separate Bethlehem from Israel. Claire, like the many women I met, shared her story and her hope for peace. Her endeavours to celebrate and sell the women's handicrafts provided an income stream for families. Her resilience to share her story provided inspiration for those who visited to continue their work in justice and advocacy. I thought of Claire this week as I prepared for International Women's Day; wondering how her life was and whether she was still getting visitors from the College where I studied.



Figure 1 Outside Claire's Shop, Bethlehem

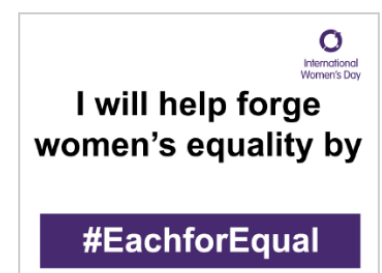
Our meeting reminds me that International Women's day is a day that invites us to look outwards; to not dwell on the negative or the challenges of my own situation, but rather stand in solidarity with those who continue to face discrimination, oppression and inequality. I stand for an equal world, an enabled world; and invite you to stand with me.

Rachel McLean

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Something to Ponder

One of the most powerful ways we can help support International Women's Day is through championing your own **#EachforEqual campaign** within your community, networks, organisations and groups. Each year the annual IWD campaign theme is celebrated, and **continues all year long**. Throughout the year, you might consider exploring ways in which you can help support women's equality throughout the world. You might return to the International Women's Day website and see what has already been done and what you might be able to do to progress the **#EachforEqual** campaign.



To Share

Loving God, we celebrate your faithfulness and love. On this day and in this year, we commit ourselves to creating a world that is equal; a world that is enabled.

In this pursuit, we commit ourselves, women and men, to the full humanity of all women everywhere. We know that whatever denies, diminishes or distorts the full humanity of women is not of God. Today, and all days, may we be radical in our love and hopeful in our outlook. To that end, we pray in solidarity with our sisters and brothers in the Holy Land this prayer for peace.

Dear God,

We pray not for us

But for our children

Men and women

Like You

We love them all equally

In every colour and race

We know love

As you taught us

We women

Know you better than anyone

Because we have children

Like You

Our Creator

God, bestow justice upon the world

And peace on earth

Stop the agony of the poor and oppressed

Stop the pain of the sick

Stop evil and give love instead

We pray on this day

From half of the population

To both halves

We love your love

Keep us in your arms

Today and forever

Composed by

Palestinian women from Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Bethany, on the occasion of International Women's Day

Resources

- For more information about International Women's Day visit the [official website](#) where you will find some amazing resources, information and history about this day.
- Listen to this great peace prayer from [Dragon School Oxford](#). It reminds me that our children really do know the way to peace, that we must work for peace in partnership and, in the words of St Augustine, "to sing is to pray twice."

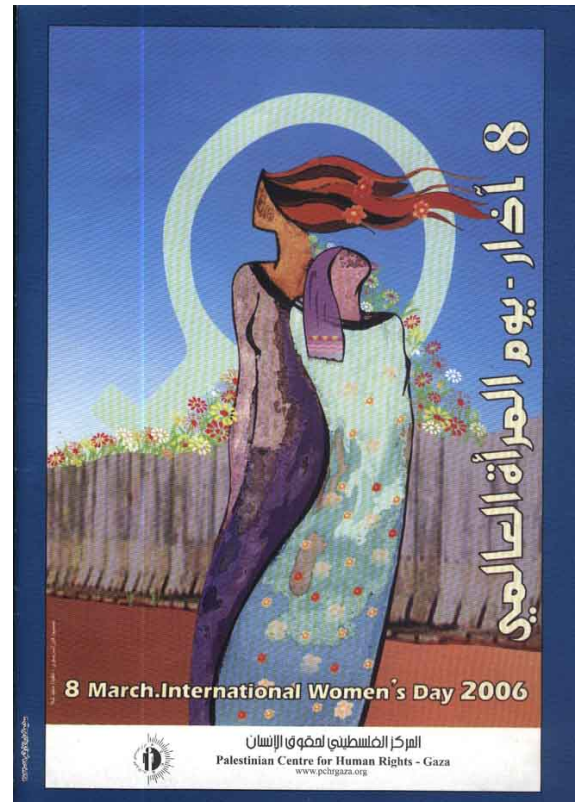


Figure 2 Image from [Palestinian Centre for Human Rights](#)



Figure 3 NASA - Peace