

IN GOD WE CAME TOGETHER

ACC-15 - Report by Rachel Elizabeth Chardon

The 56th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women has ended, and the Anglican Communion Delegates to the United Nations have returned home. Shared experiences, fresh perspectives, and newly acquired resources and advocacy skills go home with us to continue our ministries with commitment and enthusiasm!

Sent to the United Nations from their respective Provinces for the two-week session, extraordinary individuals made up our delegation. While unique in their persons, we are all Anglican sisters who came together in a place very different from our day-to-day rural homes. We supported one another as we participated in the many side and parallel events offered at the 56th session whose priority theme was the

“Empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges.”

Mutual support was magnified even more as Provincial delegates accompanied sisters to difficult meetings. They stood in solidarity with our delegation from Nippon Sei Ko Kai (the Anglican Communion in Japan) to more than six Permanent Missions to the United Nations. The purpose of these visits was to bring attention to the crisis Japan experienced in March, 2011 -- deadly nuclear contamination spread by damaged power plants as a result of the earthquake and tsunami. The message our Japanese delegates voiced at those Missions that graciously heard them was:

“Help us eliminate nuclear power plants.”

Our delegates brought their Anglican voices and perspectives to the UN and the deliberations in which they participated. Stories about rural living touched us all, helping everyone understand what it means to be connected to the land and to the land through our ancestors. They also gained a better understanding of the role that gender equity and justice play in preserving and strengthening those connections. Taking care of the land is both a deeply felt moral responsibility, and a witness to our faith. As Robin Denney of the Episcopal Church of the USA said:

“The responsibility comes with joy.”

The Revd Kathy Barrett-Lennard of the Anglican Church of Australia, who lives with her husband and children on their farm said: **“It is a spiritual connection to the land.”**

Sisterhood in the context of this Anglican gathering and engagement with the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women involved the coming together to commune with one another for a time to share diverse conditions, experiences, and concerns. In this case rural living was the focus of our common voice.

While “agreed conclusions” of the entire assembly of CSW56 failed – a disappointment- it was a privilege to walk alongside and support each other as we visibly grew in confidence and determination and made a distinctive and vital contribution to CSW56.