

International Anglican Women's Network

I was very honoured to represent the Diocese of Central Newfoundland at the 52nd United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. I was part of the thirteen person delegation from the Anglican Church of Canada, the largest delegation we have sent. We were part of the overall delegation of Anglican women from around the world that number over 125 delegates.

The Commission's focus this year was on financing. And while I learned much about questions of gender equality and budgeting, as well as lobbying, that is not what stays with me now that I have returned home. What I return to time and again is the women I met and the stories of their lives that I heard. So often we think of issues as simply ideas to be argued, both for and against, and we rarely come face to face with the persons who are most impacted by the budgetary decisions that we make. It is easy to make generalized statements about people when you do not know them; but sit and have a cup of coffee with them, pray with them, and your opinion may be greatly changed.

One of the things that excited me most was being introduced to the International Anglican Women's Network (IAWN). Although I am an active member of my church and have been involved with Women's concerns for many years, I had not had the opportunity to be a part of this group of women. As its website states: "IAWN, the International Anglican Women's Network, was formed in November 1996 to be the organization through which the voices of Anglican women would be reported to the Anglican Consultative Council." (<http://iawn.anglicancommunion.org/> or www.iawn.org) It is a fairly new organization and I believe that it has great transformative possibilities. It can provide a means of connecting Anglican women from around the globe. Now, when a group of Anglican women in Newfoundland want to reach out to their sisters from another province of the Anglican Communion, they can go to the website and find the link person in that area and be in touch. We can let people we are praying for them; we can ask people directly what it is that they are doing and how they might share it with us. We can also share our own stories, hopes, needs, and news with them.

The values of IAWN are ones that we can support enthusiastically. They state:

"We are inclusive of age, race, culture, language, education, economic status, and sexual orientation; we are informative; we are rooted in prayer; we are committed to serving and strengthening the Communion; and we strive for solidarity." And their purposes are "to endeavour to communicate; to affirm and encourage the role of women in the Church; to support the awareness of needs; to respond to issues from a women's

perspective; and to be a resource to the Anglican Consultative Council.” In a time when many are focusing on the cracks that they see in the Anglican Communion, here are a group of people working hard to make stronger connections. At our closing dinner, one bishop commented that looking around the room you could see no hint of a Communion that was on the verge of separation. That room was filled with Anglican women from around the globe sitting, eating, praying and sharing enthusiastically with one another. We shared ideas, experiences, sorrows and joys. We affirmed each other, encouraged each other and held each other up in prayer. It was an incredible experience of what the Anglican Communion calls us to be.

I encourage you take the time to look at the website. If you are a part of a group of Anglican women, I ask that you consider ways of being involved with the IAWN. If you are not already a part of network of Anglican women, then this is your chance. We have also started a facebook group for IAWN-Canada. Think of joining and connecting with women from around the country and around the globe. Take pictures of what women are doing where you are and share them. Ask questions, share ideas, be a part of a network of Anglican women that stretches across the world.