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## UNCSW60: Women's Empowerment & Sustainable Development

*By The Venerable Mere Wallace*

Delegates report to the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia

**Ecumenical Women at the United Nations**

**United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW60)**

**Kaupapa: Women's Empowerment and its link to Sustainable Development**



*Venerable Mere Wallace speaking at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women*

*"Let us work for the good of all and especially for those of the family of faith"*

Galatians 6:10

Nga mihi Aroha Kia Koutou, Nga Pihopa o Te Haahi Mihinare o Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesian.

Thank you for the opportunity to be amongst some of the most brilliant minds and peoples in the world. Thank you also for allowing me to meet some amazing people, to understand and

learn first hand the plight of our brothers and sisters in the world. To know that I come from a country that is free from war, trafficking and child marriages, that we should be grateful for what we have. At a time in the world when they were suffering from political tensions, poverty, clean water and access to shelter, war and violence, we in New Zealand were looking at changing our flag. I give thanks to God for the work of all our Bishops and Ministry teams here at home. I pray that we as the Anglican Women's Studies Council work towards a equal representation number on all of

out boards committees and trusts.

In 1995 I was privileged to have been part of the New Zealand delegation to attend the Beijing Commission on the Status of Women when the declaration and platforms for Action were set. Between 1995 and 2016, many of the declarations that came at that time have been actioned and implemented. While much has been achieved much more needs to be done as new issues and issues of the past are unravelled.



were looked after by awesome hosts and had the opportunity to think about the following.

- *How do we take home sustainable development goals on the elimination?*
- *Of discrimination against women and girls?*
- *If Worship is grounded in advocacy, how do we frame our questions on the goal themes e.g. **Daughters stepping forward?***



*“we are the daughters, sons and children of God”  
How will we come forward to call for justice and sustainability for all”*

Arriving at the Roosevelt hotel on 45<sup>th</sup> Street settling in and straight away attending the Ecumenical Women's briefing at Morgan and Lewis, which highlighted what was to be expected in the first week. I shared a room with Rebecca Kaleen-John whose husband is the Bishop of Pakistan; this allowed me to journey through her into being able to understand the culture and calamity that is happening in her country from her context. We shared a similar understanding of traditions that the people have lived with for many generations, which may not be considered as good practices in the western world. A good example between Pakistan people and Maori were arranged marriages, the reasons are very similar to ours, around mana, land and whakapapa.

We spent the first day together at the Salvation Army as part of the Ecumenical Women's orientation day. The day was made up of many speakers and it helped to open up safe spaces for women to ask questions and participate at any level they chose. This was a great opportunity to meet and greet and look at what it was that we shared and what were the many diverse issues we faced and how these could be actioned.

The NGO CSW60 Consultative day allowed a great deal of debate and korero and gave rise to the draft conclusions being able to be confirmed. I enjoyed the planning day where we

**A Snapshot of some of the confirmations that were affirmed**

**Agreed Conclusions (Advanced unedited version)**

1. **The Commission on the Status of Women reaffirms** the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and the declarations adopted by the Commission on the occasion of the tenth, fifteenth and twentieth anniversaries of the Fourth World Conference on Women.
2. **The Commission reaffirms** that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto, as well as other relevant conventions and treaties provide an international legal framework and a comprehensive set of measures for realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of all women and girls throughout their life cycle.
3. **The Commission reaffirms** that the promotion and protection of, and respect for, the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women, including the right to development, which are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, should be mainstreamed into all policies and programmes aimed at the eradication of pov-

erty, and also reaffirms the need to take measures to ensure that every person is entitled to participate in, contribute to and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development and that equal attention and urgent consideration should be given to the promotion, protection and full realization of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

4. **The Commission reaffirms** the commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls made at relevant United Nations summits and conferences, including the International Conference on Population and Development and its Programme of Action and the key actions for its further implementation.
5. **The Commission further reaffirms** commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls made at the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, as well as the recognition of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the Third UN World Conference on Disaster.

### Karakia

Each morning we attended Morning Prayer at the UN Chapel with a different denomination leading. On 17<sup>th</sup> March, the Anglican Communion under the leadership of Bishop Josiah, (the Most Reverend Josiah Idowu-Fearon is the secretary General to the Anglican Communion a family of 44 churches in 165 countries and 85 million members worldwide) allowed our team to take the morning devotions. Leading and doing the mihi for the service was a privilege and allowed me to karanga the introduction. The feedback was positive and many Episcopalians commented on our prayer book. They love the fact it is written in other languages. New Zealand has a beautiful resource in that we able to be bilingual in our worship and switching between English and Maori is a taonga gifted by God.

Some of my most spiritual moments during my visit to the United Nations was in the conversations I had with other women as I tried to understand their many dilemma's which we in New Zealand don't have. I felt that there were many things we could be actively involved in when it comes to matters of faith and matters of the church.

### Sister Church's

I was grateful to two dioceses that want to become sister churches to us; this could be something that Te Waipounamu wants to



*Makiko Fukuzawa from Japan and Archbishop Josiah Idowu-Fearon with Venerable Mere Wallace after the Anglican led Ecumenical Service*



*Going through the New Zealand Prayer book, Anne Smith, Ven Mere Wallace, Beblon Parks and Jenny Humphreys*



*Venerable Mere Wallace with Dr Saratu Dikko and Revd Rhoda Wabukala from the Diocese of Kenya*

do or the Tai o Poutini.

The Diocese of Kenya with the Revd Rhoda Luvuyo Wabukala and the Revd Linea Haufiku who is the Vicar-General for the Diocese of Namibia. I was very impressed with this young woman whose role in her diocese is huge, she shared with me how she had driven a thousand miles to help support a young woman who was in crisis. To be able to learn more about the issues her and her congregation face is something I am interested in sharing with our sisters and brothers as we develop relationships of support and care.

### Some of the parallel events

- Mobilizing Women for Climate justice with Julianna Velez robe Wedo - Who looked at Solar Thermal energy, water and healthy climate and using solar energy for cooking.
- Empowerment through access to safe drinking water, Tegemeo Women's project in Tanzania - This is a success story about a empowerment women's project that has helped the community and local authorities.
- Exploration of women in migration in the context of global inequalities - How the different ways of survival migration affects women and the tensions between the development goals and economic forces that undermine these goals and the need for cross sectoral movements that can make SGCs implementation impossible.
- Empowering women in migration is not only about migrant women it's about all women affected by migration, including women whose families are separated when husbands and children migrate. There are women who spend their time search-

ing for loved ones along the migration trails.

- Women and Girls Matter, the disappearing generations and races - The case of the Tsou tribe in Taiwan.
- Transforming Society through Women's Empowerment.
- Mobilizing Faith Communities to combat Human Trafficking.
- Cybercrime against women and girls.

There were several other workshops I attended, only to understand what a great place we lived in and that our worries and issues were things that we could fix and that we had policies in place to help us move issues to action.

What I also noted that we, the Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesian, had in place social justice, and several other commissions but we lacked having relationships with Iwi, community organisations and agencies that we could use to help our people in our church with many issues. If we are to become the first best place to go to, then we need to become part of the community to care for God's people.

### Advocacy and Gender Justice

*"We talk religion in a world that worships the bread but does not distribute it, that practices ritual rather than righteousness that confesses but does not repent"*

Church of England Action on Climate Change 2015-2016

Synod motion on climate change - In July 2015 Synod members overwhelmingly supported the motion on Climate Change, the Paris COP21 conference, and the Mission of the Church. The Lambeth declaration called on faith communities to recognise the need to make the transition to a low carbon economy and to fast and pray for the success of the international negotiations.

I need to acknowledge the women's studies council and the work that we continue to do. While we are looking at Gender Equality, we will also acknowledge the numbers of each tikanga to ensure balance across our committees are consistent.

I give thanks and the glory back to our Lord for making all things possible.

*Ven Mere Wallace—2016*

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## Statement to the Anglican Consultative Council meeting in Lusaka, April 2016 From the Anglican delegation to the 60th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, March 2016.

We gathered in New York as women from 14 countries across the Anglican Communion – a diverse delegation of priests, social workers, parents, theologians, artists, human rights activists, community development workers, sexual assault experts, university students, and so much more.

We have been profoundly changed by this encounter with one another, and the inspiration of so many other women and men who gathered for the 2016 Commission.

In a context of daily worship, deep conversation, and prayer, we considered together “women’s empowerment and its link to sustainable development” and progress and barriers to “ending violence against women and girls”.

**Sustainable Development Goals – a vision of God’s kingdom come**

The UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were agreed

to in 2015. They are a framework for seeking the wellbeing of all people and the earth, with every country challenged to examine and address injustice, poverty, and climate change in their own context, and to support others in their efforts also. You can read more about the 17 SDGs here: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>

The SDGs are a unique and remarkable platform for action on a vision that affirms our longing as Christians to work for the kingdom of God on earth. They reflect deep biblical themes of mutual responsibility for living well

together, seeking the equality of all people created in the image of God, the responsibility to care for God's earth, and God's concern for the vulnerable and marginalized.

No commitment since the UN Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948 has had such universal buy-in on a global agenda, nor resulted from such extensive consultation with governments and with civil society, including faith-based organizations.

We note that some Anglican churches around the world have already recognized the God-given vision of the SDGs and adopted the framework for Church action.

### Anglican Church – vital partners in achieving the SDGs

"Faith-based organizations" are identified as vital partners – of Governments, United Nations agencies, and civil society organizations – in achieving the SDGs. We were reminded afresh that each of us in the global Anglican family has a vital role to play in achieving the SDGs.

As Anglicans, some of us are ourselves among the most marginalized in our global community. Many of our parishes and agencies are "on the frontline" every day in caring for those most vulnerable.

As Anglicans, we can both act for change and also speak up when our governments are not meeting their responsibilities. As Anglican people – parishes, agencies, networks, leaders, thinkers, activists, prayers, listeners – we are uniquely placed to be effective agents of change for a more godly world.

We were challenged as Churches and Church agencies to



*Venerable Mere gifted a copy of our New Zealand Prayer book on behalf of us all on the Epitaph Altar at Old St Paul's parish which is opposite Ground Zero, New York.*

search out creative partnerships and collaboration. For example, after mapping the organisation's collaboration with faith-based organizations in nearly 150 countries around the world, UNICEF have concluded that although faith-based organizations "are often uniquely placed to reach the most vulnerable, and often have the networks, resources and capacity for social mobilisation to do so" ... "a lack of trust and understanding between [churches and so-called secular development organisations] can undermine cooperation ... and the potential benefits of collaboration often remain elusive."

### Inequality – the root of poverty and violence

Through presentations of evidence-based research and programs from Governments, UN agencies, development agencies, and faith-based organizations, we learned about the extent of gender-based violence that plagues all countries, at great cost to every society.

We heard that entrenched cultures of silence and collusion enable violence and exploitation to continue, and we wrestled with the need to examine our own lives, churches and workplaces in the context of family violence and gender inequality.

We were encouraged to learn that, across the world, the political intent to achieve gender equality and prevent violence against women and girls has never been higher. It is clear that a fundamental shift is needed to ensure that societies invest in women and girls.

We draw confidence from Scripture that, in God's kingdom, equality has been decreed, noting that "there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and fe-

male, for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Gal 3:28).

As Anglicans, we have many people and resources immediately at hand to "change the story" of inequality and violence.

### A place at the table for all

As women gathered from across the Anglican Communion we named the reality that we are often not included in decision-making that affects our churches and our communities - despite our expertise, wisdom and deep commitment to the future of vibrant churches and communities.

We commit to speaking up in our own contexts, to enabling others who are often excluded from being heard, and to taking our place at decision-making tables wherever possible. We look forward to the day when ACC resolution 13.31, which affirms the goal of "equal representation of women in decision making at all levels of the Church", is a reality. We invite all across the Communion to partner with us in making this so.

### New conversations at the table

As women gathered from across the Anglican Communion, we named the reality that the legacies of colonialism, paternalism, and wealth disparity continue to diminish our relationships with one another, despite our best intentions and efforts to pursue long-term partnerships.

We commit to finding new ways to relate to one another; to seeking out new paradigms that are based on equality and respect; and to having courageous conversations that engage with our differences in humility and love, as we relate to one another as a global Anglican family. We invite all across the Communion to partner with us in making this a reality.

### An invitation:

We invite you to join us in having these courageous conversations about what it might look like to be part of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. How can we each play our part?

We invite you, all Anglicans – people, parishes, agencies, networks, theological colleges, and decision-making groups - to prayerfully join with us in seeking God's kingdom here on earth

through achieving the SDGs.

We invite you to have courageous conversations with new potential partners who have a shared commitment to the SDGs, but do not acknowledge a religious faith.

We invite you to share success stories of Anglicans already working towards the SDGs.

We invite you to have courageous conversations about the violence and exploitation happening in our homes, our churches, our workplaces and to do what you can to speak out and prevent violence.



*Ecumenical Group at Holy Trinity Cathedral after the Palm Sunday service.*

We invite you to join us in addressing the realities of gender inequality in Anglican Churches across the world.

We invite you to join us in having courageous conversations about what it means to be a global Anglican family together.

We commit to start with transforming our own lives.

### With gratitude:

We are thankful for the gift of being a member of this delegation, and give thanks to God for all who enabled this opportunity – both in our own countries and in the Anglican Communion Office to the UN.

The commitment to sending an Anglican delegation to the UN Commission on the Status of Women each year is a significant investment in seeking God's kingdom on earth, and in enabling women across the Anglican Community to more effectively lead and empower others in their own communities.

## The Centre for Anglican Women's Studies (AWSC)

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The Centre for Anglican Women's Studies, commonly known as the **Anglican Women's Studies Centre** was set up to serve and to advance the interests and needs of the women of this Church particularly those undertaking Theological training.



The Link Representatives from each Diocese and Hui Amorangi have been chosen for their leadership ability to identify, gather, facilitate, resource and encourage women in their educational preparation for ministry whether lay or ordained. It is hoped that the Anglican Women's Studies Centre can continue to enjoy the support of each Diocese and Hui Amorangi in this endeavour.

The issue of increasing numbers of women in representative positions across the councils and committees of the Church is seen as a high priority and the practice of intentional mentoring by those already in national and international representative roles is seen as a good way to expose women of this church to fulfill their potential as leaders.

Ensuring that women's voices and stories are heard now and in the future is also one of our continued aims whether it be by traditional methods of publication or using more contemporary technologies like website publication. We remain optimistic that through continued support, the needs of women throughout this Province will be valued and recognized.



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**EDITORIAL DISCLAIMER:** The Anglican Women's Studies Centre is committed to encouraging and enabling women's voices and perspectives from across the diversity of the Church to be shared more widely. We acknowledge that women's experiences of church differ considerably and that resultant theological perspectives also differ considerably. In general the AWSC does not exercise editorial control, rather we welcome as many voices as are willing to contribute.