

United Nations Commission on the Status of Women CSW 61 - 2017

The Rev Carol L Grant, United Nations Convenor



Presbyterian Women Aotearoa New Zealand
Final Report including Statements to CSW 2018,
and CSW 61 delegation members comments



**United Nations Report 2017 from
Carol Grant, PWANZ
United Nations Convenor**

It has been a privilege to serve Presbyterian Women Aotearoa New Zealand as United Nations Convenor for the last four years.

As this is my final report it will be both a summary and a reflection.

During the last four years I have learned a great deal about the ministry of women in the church, the leadership styles, talents and skills we have to offer, and the frustrations we encounter.

I have discovered many things about our ministry as Presbyterian women here in New Zealand as well as our influence as a faith based organisation internationally. I have learned a great deal about debating, working in national and international forums, how to make our voice more effective, and many different ways to network in familiar and unfamiliar places. Speaking up and speaking out about injustices is a way of life!



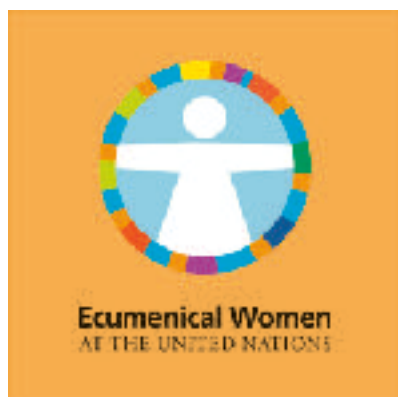
I have appreciated ...

The ongoing and growing interest from the women of the church and wider community.
The encouragement and responses from national and local women's networks.
The regular liaison with national and international NGO's and Government officials.
The international friendships and networks formed ecumenically here and overseas.
Enabling women and girls to attend the Commission on the Status of Women.
The support, focus, and inclusion from the women at the NZ Ministry of Women.
Inspiring UN Women, and feminist activists (including good men) at every CSW event.
Colleagues and friends at PCUSA and Ecumenical Women at the UN
Regular contact with wise women who long for change throughout the PCANZ
Young women who have included me in their circles and networks.
Being able to highlight PWANZ at the 2016 General Assembly.
And so much more!

The first year was a baptism of fire as I went to the UN Commission on the Status of Women almost immediately after I was appointed. I was thankful that I already had a wide knowledge of issues facing women and girls in New Zealand and around the world. Even so, being confronted with issues faced by the world's women at the UN was very challenging. The personal stories of oppressed women and girls and women from war torn countries are tragic. New Zealand is a wonderful country and I am a proud Kiwi. Other countries as developed and less developed nations watch our country with interest because we are small, often punch above our weight on issues such as being nuclear free and that NZ women were the first in the world to gain the right to vote.

But questions asked of me were confronting.

Why do you treat your women and girls with such violence?
Why are you killing your vulnerable babies so often?
Why is there such a high level of poverty and homelessness?
Why are you polluting your rivers and water supplies?
Why have you not ratified the Climate Change Agreement?
Why is your teen suicide rate so high and mental health such an issue?
Why are so many of your indigenous people imprisoned?



At that first Commission I was grateful, too, that I had already forged links internationally and ecumenically and that I could activate my personal networks in New York. I appreciated the encouragement I received from other NZ NGO's, especially Beverley Turner from Pacific Women's Watch, Ministry for Women, UN Women, Ecumenical Women at the UN as well as colleagues from the PCUSA, the Uniting Church of Canada, Catholic Women at the UN and NY Anglican friends and women colleagues and theologians from around the world who networked, emailed, used Skype and Facebook and webinar to make contact.

The first question I was asked at that Commission was "Where is your delegation?" I did not know that since 1998 when APW gained its Special Consultative Status, PWANZ could have sent a delegation of twenty women to the Commission each March each year. So on the flight home the first decision I made as UN Convenor was ensure in that in each subsequent year strong delegations interested in the planned UN themes from PWANZ would attend each CSW in future.

In summary . . .



In 2014: the Priority theme: Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls.
Review theme: Access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work, from the 54th session of the CSW.

Advertising, networking, raising awareness and speaking to many church and community groups was hard work when I returned to NZ as I endeavoured to raise the profile of both this unique opportunity for women in the PCANZ, and our role as an NGO with UN Special Consultative Status from New Zealand. One of the most difficult tasks was to get information out via at the normal church channels and publications.

The ministry of women by PW women in our churches and the amazing mission work and fundraising nationally and internationally is often not acknowledged at all or sidelined.

PWANZ is seldom highlighted in our national church publications. I enjoyed the challenge of profile raising even if at times it has been very frustrating.



Bush Fire

One way to do this was to initiate, with Shona Bethany, the then PWANZ Secretary, an e-newsletter called BushFire which was started in April 2015. Regular updates on UN matters appear now in each issue. Members around the country have appreciated this source of UN news. PWANZ United Nations news has also been included in Bush Telegraph, the PCANZ e-newsletter to reach a wider audience. Special thanks to Sally Russell for the reminders each month and her willingness to make sure UN news was circulated widely. In 2017 PWANZ UN news was finally featured in SPANZ this year. Helen Speirs, a delegation member in 2017 and opinion writer for the Otago Daily Times wrote several feature articles on our involvement at CSW 61. These were also published in The Herald and online. I have appreciated the many opportunities to speak to PW groups, the Southern Presbytery and to church leaders and ministers about this UN role and the opportunities for women to participate in the decision making in a global arena. The UN good news is spreading - perhaps not like wild fire but certainly igniting sparks around the country.



2015: Priority Themes: The main focus of the session was on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, including current challenges that affect its implementation and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The Commission undertook a review of progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, twenty years after its adoption at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. The review (Beijing+20) also included the outcomes of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly, the first five-year assessment conducted after the adoption of the Platform for Action, which highlighted further actions and initiatives. The session also addressed opportunities for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post-2015 development agenda.

In March 2015, for the first time, Presbyterian Women had a delegation of twelve at the CSW 59 at the United Nations in New York. Six lay women and six secondary school students. One student was able to attend the UN Youth Forum associated with CSW 59.

This first delegation I planned targeted lay church women with a knowledge of the current challenges that affect the implementation of achieving the empowerment of women and forums such as the various declarations and platforms and the decisions made at these, and younger women from a local church school who were beginning to plan careers that would make a difference for women in the future. A group from Columba College answered my invitation. The retiring school principal and one parent accompanied the girls.



Taking schoolgirls raised all kinds of problems as young woman under 18 years must be chaperoned at all times at the Parallel and Side events and whilst on UN premises. Supervision is vital as New York is one of the most densely populated cities in the USA.



I also hoped to enable one young woman to attend the UN Youth Forum at CSW where young leaders can make their voices heard and contribute to the UN debates. I am grateful to a member of the NZ Human Rights Commission, Dr Jackie Blue, who was willing to take time to chaperon one young woman from the PWANZ delegation to this event.

Application process

Each prospective delegation member submitted a written expression of interest and then a formal application with a current CV. Each woman needed to be fully self funded. Following the delegation to CSW each member was asked to write a comment on their learning, participation and experiences. This was a steep learning curve indeed. I discovered a great deal about careful selection, the self motivation of individuals, and how group dynamics can be affected by individuals with a different agenda.

I invited a small group of women to work with me as I planned ahead. I also had the support of previous UN Convenors. It was interesting to see how well, or not, women prepared for the Commission by asking questions, reading and probing the information sent to them and investigating the UN websites. Those who prepared well were the women who benefitted most from this experience. Arriving unprepared at the UN wastes time and prevents immediate engagement. It is not a conference with handout prepared papers

The presence of our delegation was celebrated at the Ecumenical Women's events and members were warmly welcomed especially by PCUSA. Members of the PW delegation arranged their own accommodation so we were scattered a group. The following year I hoped to enable the next delegation to bond more closely by staying together, sharing information and experiences, and working as a team to ensure we covered the events.

At CSW 59 the Commonwealth Secretariat National Women's Machinery Meeting was also held in New York. I was privileged to be invited by the NZ Government to attend and observe this important event.

Fifty two countries are members of the Commonwealth spanning Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe and the Pacific. They are diverse – and amongst the world's largest, smallest, richest and poorest countries. Thirty-one of our members are classified as small states – countries with a population size of 1.5 million people or less and larger member states that share similar characteristics with them. All members subscribe to the Commonwealth's values and principles outlined in The Commonwealth Charter. Leaders of member countries shape Commonwealth policies and priorities. Every two years, they meet to discuss issues affecting the Commonwealth and the wider world at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). All members have an equal say – regardless of size or economic stature. This ensures even the smallest member countries have a voice in shaping the Commonwealth.

Leaders at this event work to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in all social, economic and political spheres by providing technical assistance to member countries to support skills training and capacity building initiatives, monitoring and evaluation and high level advocacy, research and knowledge generation and lead the way for building consensus on key global gender priorities for the Commonwealth.



This work centres on key aspects of human development towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, Post-2015 Sustainable Goals, and global commitments on gender equality and overall empowerment of women. There are three inter-linked functions to this gender work:

- 1 Promoting women's rights and gender equality in Commonwealth countries through advocacy, policy advice, capacity building, and technical assistance.

2 Convening triennial meetings of Commonwealth Ministers responsible for Women's Affairs, annual meetings of Commonwealth Women's National Machineries and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting Women's Forum.

3 Leading and coordinating systems and mechanisms for effective gender mainstreaming.

The full report can be read on the internet.



2016: Priority themes:

Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development. Review theme: The elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls, from the 57th session of the CSW



The second delegation I planned included younger clergy and lay women in active leadership roles in church associated networks with a strong interest in the Commission's themes, I took a leap in faith and booked multiple rooms in a Manhattan hotel for us all. This was very successful especially as I was able to negotiate reduced room rates which kept the costs down for PW delegation members and made it safer for everyone. The delegation was a diverse group with members representing an incredible range of interests which was reflected in the variety of events attended by individuals.

At this Commission I was privileged to be invited by the Rev Mark Koenig PCUSA at the UN to be one of the presenters at a UN Parallel Event entitled "Breaking Cycles of Poverty through Education"

An emphasis on education, and on free public education, has been a hallmark of churches that stand in the Reformed tradition since the days of John Calvin.

The Presbyterian parallel event at the 60th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women focused on the role of education in breaking cycles of poverty, particularly for women. A panel presentation lifted up ways Presbyterians support education in Kenya, Aotearoa New Zealand, the United States and around the world.

Beth Olker, Field Staff for Presbyterian College Women & Young Women's Ministries, Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries, Presbyterian Mission Agency, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) moderated the panel. Panel members were:

Wanda Beauman, Vice Moderator for Justice and Peace Concerns, Churchwide Coordinating Team, Presbyterian Women Inc., in the Presbyterian Church USA

Carol Grant, United Nations Convenor, Presbyterian Women Aotearoa New Zealand

Veronica Muchiri, National Women's Guild Organizer/Secretary, Presbyterian Church of East Africa

Frank Dimmock, Catalyst Addressing the Root Causes of Global Poverty, Presbyterian World Mission, Presbyterian Mission Agency, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A)

It was a privilege to write the PWANZ Report to the PCANZ General Assembly held in Dunedin in 2016 .The recommendations were all agreed.

- 1 That General Assembly support and actively encourage the Presbyterian Women Aotearoa New Zealand national and international projects and outreach within congregations and presbyteries.
- 2 That a PWANZ special collection be taken on the Sunday nearest to International Women's Day each March to support the ongoing advocacy role of Presbyterian Women Aotearoa New Zealand locally, regionally, internationally, as well as at the United Nations.
- 3 That General Assembly re-affirm the principle that membership of church courts, committees and other formal groups reflect the gender equality within the Church.
- 4 That the Council of the Assembly be asked to review all current policies, regulations and decisions through a gender equality lens to ensure that the needs, aspirations and welfare of women and girls are taken into account, and to ensure the voices of women are encouraged and heard in all the courts of the church and other decision making bodies.

Building Capacity- Presbyterian Women

In 2016 PWANZ was finally able to access the CWM Grant of \$10,000 per year to PWANZ for five years to build capacity for women in the PCANZ. This grant was awarded after an application was made to CWM by the former PW National Coordinating Group.

A Building Capacity retreat with women from around NZ was held at Burnside near Oamaru to initiate the first PWANZ Women's Assembly. This continued the building capacity work begun by Pamela Tankersley, me, and former members and leaders of NCG who longed to see PWANZ grow and flourish in new ways. It is wonderful that the women participating at this capacity building 'retreat' were the key motivators, speakers and presenters at the first 2017 PWANZ Women's Assembly. "Who is at the Well?" held in early November in Dunedin at Mosgiel IN 2017.

Look Who's At The Well
Women's Assembly
Supported by CWM with a "building capacity" grant
3 - 5 November 2017 at Mosgiel

WE ARE
Equip, Encourage & Empower

Joy Cowley
Story Telling

Anna Dean
Angela Meyer
Double Denim
Alofa Lale
Craft & Culture

Deborah Bower
Metiria Turei

Jin Sook Kim
Women's Spirituality

Details: Email Sandra Waldrom pwanz2016@gmail.com



2017: Priority theme: Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work. Review theme: Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls, from the 58th session of the CSW.

Exploring the priority theme on women's empowerment in the changing world of work was an important opportunity to strengthen policy recommendations for one of the most defining issues of the gender equality agenda. The rapid changes in economies and especially in the world of work present both challenges and opportunities for women. The Commission was an opportunity to take stock of these changes and to make sure that women are well positioned to benefit from them. This will require commitment and deliberate actions from all sectors - civil society, businesses, corporations, and along with the Commissions decisions and agreements will play a key role in finding the way forward. As Phumzile Miambo-Ngcuka, Under Secretary of the UN and Executive Director of UN Women said, "Let us use this moment to speak with one voice and share solidarity for feminist movement-building to create a better world of women and girls."

CSW61 PWANZ delegation - United Nations Commission on the Status of Women



The Rev Jin Sook Kim, PCANZ, Dunedin, the Rev Saifaleupolu Siitia PCANZ, Auckland, the Rev Carol Grant (UN Convenor PWANZ) Dunedin, Lynette Heine PCANZ Lay Minister, Greymouth, Occupational Therapist - Westland, Mira.Karunanidhi, Year 13 Secondary School Student - Wellington. Dr Chitra.Karunanidhi, Medical Practitioner - Wellington, Chiquita Holden Victim Support, Homicide Trauma - Wellington, Kate Saxton, Police Sergeant, Recruiting Royal NZ Police College, Rebekah Kitto Police Constable, Tactical Crime Unit, Dunedin, Rachel Tombs Youth leader - Knox Church Dunedin, Otago University Student, Dr Sue Bidrose, CEO. Dunedin City Council, and Helen Speirs, Senior Editorial Executive, Otago Daily Times.

It was exciting to plan for the 2017 delegation as gender equality in the world of work and the empowerment of women had been highlighted during the year in NZ with negotiations for pay equity highlighting of the difficulties women faced at work - valuing of skills, leadership barriers, male toxicity, sexual harassment, unconscious bias, opposition from successful women in a male environment seeing other women as a threat.

The third PWANZ delegation included lay and ordained women and girls who were already making a difference as leaders within their own networks, who had the ability to reflect on their work situations, promote gender equality in the church and in society who would benefit from increased global awareness personally and professionally. It was ethnically diverse.

Personal highlights - I enjoyed attending the Consultation Day with our delegation, EW Orientation Day with other faith filled women from almost every country, and many of the UN co sponsored events, Parallel and Side events especially those featuring the issues faced by working women, indigenous women and those calling for changes in labour laws. This year was also the 45th Anniversary celebration - Platform of Champions. Speaking with Kevin Cassidy , ILO Office at the UN on NZ's gender pay gap was fascinating. There are good men fighting hard for women's rights to pay equity where decisions are made. I also attended for the first time the Opening Ceremony and two Ministerial Round Tables when ministers from UN countries present their statements on the priority theme.

Morning briefings hosted by UN Women were rescheduled this year which clashed with Ecumenical Women's morning worship but these were useful, and more participatory. The new Secretary General, António Guterres, hosted an event to which all women were invited to ask questions and present current concerns. He was well aware that women present would have preferred a woman in that role.

I had arranged for the PWANZ delegation to meet with Helen Clark, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, but unfortunately a massive snow storm called Stella smothered New York with thick snow, the mayor closed the entire city and even the UN was closed. Helen Clark did not make it back to New York before the three airports shut down and we were all confined to our hotel. The weather failed to dampen our spirits and just served to deepen our PW friendships. Making snow angels was fun in the park!



During the four years I have participated in the UN and NGO interactions and networking overseas and nationally continues as decisions are followed up, negotiations begin, surveys are completed, networks are expanded, and statements worked on for the next Commission the following year. Each year Presbyterian Women New Zealand have contributed to or responded to various statements and submissions. Our voice is a unique one, as we have the ability to draw attention to issues and to speak out against injustice.

Ministry for Women International Caucus meetings

Twice a year the NZ Ministry for Women hosts the MW International Caucus meeting for those directly involved at the UN Commissions. The new Minister for Women, Julie Anne Genter of the Green Party, was recently sworn in by Governor General Dame Patsy Reddy as the new Minister for Women, in a ceremony at Government House. She will, as Minister for Women, attend and contribute to these meetings. Nine other women were also sworn in as ministers, including Jacinda Ardern who became the third woman to hold the position of Prime Minister of New Zealand.



• **2018: Priority theme: Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls.**

Review theme: Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women.

In preparation for CSW 62 in March 2018 Statements from NGO's had to be submitted by October the previous year. A strict word limit is imposed by ECOSOC.

Our responses were an integral part of the Ecumenical Women at the UN Statement.

I have attached the Ecumenical Women's final statement for your interest.

We also joined our voice to a combined statement from the Human Rights Commission and Rural Women NZ. **The submitted Statement by PCANZ is attached.**

Also attached are the individual comments from PWANZ delegation members to the Commission on the Status of Women 2017

AnneMarie Tangney and Mavis Duncanson, the new UN Convenors have been appointed to share the role of PWANZ Convenor as I step down after four very rewarding years. Both gained experience of the UN Commissions on the Status of Women as former PWANZ delegation members. I wish them both every blessing as they forge new pathways and represent Presbyterian women of all ages throughout the Church at the UN.

There are many other women I would like to thank but far too many to name individually. Grateful thanks the leaders of other NZ NGO's for their friendship and support for the work of PWANZ at the United Nations and to all those at the Ministry of Women who work hard to raise issues, research and report on progress for women here in New Zealand.

Special thanks to the small Transition Team and Advisory Board members for having the courage to face the future with confidence. We worked hard but it was a rewarding time as together we shared the responsibility given to us to implement change.

Every blessing to the PWANZ Executive members. I wish you all well for the future.

Carol Grant, PWANZ United Nations Convenor, November 2017

CSW61 New York 2017 - Mira Karunanidhi - United Nations CSW Youth Forum

The 61st Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women took place from the 13th-24th of March 2017. The CSW61 Youth Forum took place on the weekend of the 11th-12th of March 2017.

During the Commission's annual two-week session, representatives of UN Member States, UN entities and non-governmental organisations gathered at the UN headquarters in New York to discuss the progress and emerging issues that affect gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Friday 10th March

After meeting up with the rest of the PWANZ delegation and obtaining our official UN grounds passes from the identification unit, we made the short walk through the bustling streets of Manhattan to the United Nations building. We were required to go through an intense security process (much like at the airport!) and were then ushered into the foyer of the main building. The first step into the UN building was surreal; I had to pause and take a moment to comprehend the fact that I was among some of the greatest minds in the world at one of the most historic buildings in the world. After taking some obligatory delegation photos, we had our first informal delegation briefing with a good cup of hot coffee to compromise for the cold New York weather outside.

Saturday 11th March

Today was the first day of the Youth Forum at CSW61. The opening ceremony was led by the Executive Director of UN Women; Madame Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka. The three "Es" of the forum were; empower, engage and entertain. It was incredibly encouraging to see several young men among the sea of young women at the forum.

We were delighted to hear musical performances from young feminists; Tess Wolgemuth, Trevor Arnett and William Otuck and activist Meredith O'Connor. Opening statements were then given by H.E Amina Mohammed (Deputy Secretary-General of the UN), Malayah Harper (General Secretary of World YWCA) and Lakshmi Puri (Assistant Secretary General & Deputy Executive Director of UN Women), among others.

The first session was a plenary in investing in young women's leadership in the implementations of the sustainable development goals. The panelists included; Pernille Borgbo (Youth Advisor to the Permanent Mission of Denmark to the UN), and Unami Moatswi (Young Women Leader, World YWCA).

William Otuck spoke about the importance of young men and boys in gender equality. He indicated that young men have a critical role in women's rights as it becomes much more relevant for them to understand the importance when they become fathers of daughters. The African philosopher France Folon said that "*every generation has a mission to fulfil arbitrary*" and our generations' mission is to end gender equality. Through this, Otuck stressed the importance of both men and women, as a generation to make a choice of a generation.

Many young men question the relevance of their role in women's rights, however, Otuck stressed the idea that men will be fathers one day and asked the question of what kind of world we want our daughters to live in.

Her Excellency Amina Mohammed stressed the fact that change will not happen at the United Nations HQ in New York or in Geneva but in our very own communities. We are the largest cohort of young people in history entering the labour market and we must commit to putting the word 'power' back in empowerment.

During lunch break, option parallel events were held. I attended the event titled; *"Listen. Learn. Engage. – Tools to Help Young Activists Affect Change"*. I found this session the most useful as I learnt to differentiate between an advocate and an activist and was given the opportunity to share my goals for my community and write an action plan.

In the afternoon, I attended the plenary session: Young Women as an Economic Force. One of the panelists was our very own Kiwi, Kimberley Chambers! The role of entrepreneurship was discussed and relevant questions about the role of social taboos on accessibility to education were brought up.

In the evening, I attended a thematic session on developing education and skills for young women's leadership. A key phrase that I took away from the session was the fact that young girls shouldn't be aspiring to be supermodels but rather super role-models. I thought this was a nice message to convey to younger girls and really made me think about societal expectations for women.

Monday 13th March

Monday March 13th saw the official opening of the 61st Commission on the Status of Women.

The day kicked off with a plenary session in the General Assembly which was chaired by H.E Antonia de Aguiar Patriota (chair of the CSW) and included keynote speeches from the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and the UN Under Secretary General and Executive Director of UN Women, Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka. The plenary also included opening statements from ministers and representatives from all around the world.

From then on, we raced around the UN building, attending the numerous side events hosted by various government representatives and NGOs. The hardest part of the conference was deciding which event to attend and then actually fighting to get a seat! The side events were my favourite as they tended to be panel discussions and Q&A sessions which meant more opportunities to speak and contribute as well as gaining valuable perspectives to implement back in our communities.

The side events I attended included: Women in Engineering - One Million Girls in STEM Campaign hosted by UNESCO and Senegal, Intersectionality: Inclusive Gender Equality and Gender Dimensions of Modern-Day Slavery. I learnt the meaning of intersectionality- a concept that I had previously no knowledge on. You cannot work for a community without involving the community- "nothing for us, without us."

I found the women in engineering event particularly interesting as many of my friends and peers are passionate about STEM-related fields but feel inferior to their male counterparts. Two key problems were identified:

1. Getting girls and women into the STEM industry (glass ceiling)
2. Retaining women in the STEM industry (they leave to raise a family)

It was an incredibly surreal experience being able to interact with such accomplished women in their fields.

From ministers, to senators, to heads of states, to CEOs, to executive directors of multinationals.

Near the end of the day, there was much talk about the historic blizzard that was on its way to rock the city. To much dismay, it was later announced that most of the city, including schools, workplaces and public transport would be closed the following day.

Tuesday 14th March

Experiencing a blizzard in New York City was another thing to tick off the bucket list! I woke up to 8 inches of snow outside the hotel and the predictable news that the UN would be closed due to inclement weather. Unfortunately, today was the day our delegation was meant to be meeting Helen Clark. Disappointing as it was, we took the opportunity to head to Macy's Department Store for what ended up being a six-hour shopping trip! Needless to say, the 9-story department store was 'the biggest Macy's department store in the world'.

Wednesday 15th March

We returned to official proceedings today, with more parallel and side events. The sessions I attended today included; 1) Investing in Refugee Women: Turning Challenges into Opportunities, 2) National action on Indigenous women's economic empowerment (Australia, Canada and New Zealand perspectives), and 3) Social norms, gender equality and the empowerment of young people hosted by UK and Denmark.

My favourite session was the one hosted by UK and Denmark. I was very lucky to get into this event as the demand for the session was incredibly high. Being considerably younger than the thousands of people at the conference proved to be of use! I had the privilege of speaking in this session when the moderator asked for a perspective from a young person in the room. Additionally, a UN security guard was kind enough to let me in after spotting the disappointed look on my face after waiting for more than an hour in the queue, only to find out that the person in front of me was the last they were letting in!

Key learning's from this session included digital sexual abuse via. revenge pornography. The youth activist, Emma Holten was a panelist in this session and her impassioned speech left me incredibly inspired. She was a victim of revenge pornography and was using her experiences as a platform to create awareness of its prevalence. The session hosted by Australia, Canada and New Zealand, entitled, "National action on Indigenous Women's Economic Empowerment (Australia, Canada and New Zealand Perspectives)" was also interesting and easily relatable due to the New Zealand presence in the room. The moderator for this event was Australian Senator, the Hon. Michaela Cash and included our very own Helen Potiki from the Ministry of Women.

She spoke about how there is still systematic discrimination within institutions and support is needed in our justice systems to address domestic and sexual violence within our communities, particularly with indigenous individuals. This was interesting to note for our delegation as two of our delegates were police officers!

What a jam-packed day it was! Despite the hectic schedule; that night, we took a late-night adventure to Times Square. How does one go about describing the chaos of Times Square? Tourists zig zag in and out of lit buildings, dodging in between yellow taxis and food carts. Only after witnessing Times Square at midnight,

I realised how suitable the name 'the city that never sleeps' is! Located in the very heart of buzzing Manhattan, there is nothing more satisfying than standing in the centre of Times Square and looking up at the massive, lit up billboards that are constantly playing advertisements and contemplating just how small you really are in this world. It was truly electrifying.

Thursday 16th March

Thursday morning kicked off with a breakfast meeting at the New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations, hosted by the Hon. Jo Goodhew on behalf of the Deputy Prime Minister of NZ, Paula Bennett. All the representatives from the NGOs from NZ were invited and it was a pleasant surprise to be ushered into a small piece of New Zealand in the middle of snow-filled Manhattan! The delegation that I was part of was Presbyterian Women Aotearoa New Zealand. We had a diverse range of people in our group from police officers to reverends to university students to doctors and more!

We were given the opportunity to mingle with the other representatives and then we settled down to the more formal part of the breakfast; discussing the role and progress of New Zealand at the CSW.

After the breakfast meeting, we returned to the UN. Thursday was also my last day at the Commission. The UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and the UN Under Secretary General and Executive Director of UN Women, Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka were the two most prominent, high-level figures at the commission and I was lucky enough to be involved in a ministerial roundtable led by Dr. Phumzile titled; *Equality in Politics: Another 50 years to reach 50-50?*

I found this session particularly interesting as women in politics is one of the topics I am most passionate about. Again, I was privileged enough to be able to speak at this session and engage in the Q&A. This session left me bursting with ideas to implement in New Zealand to encourage political participation in young girls.

I learnt that only three parliaments in the world have 50% or more women MPs in one of their chambers. This made me consider the House of Representatives in New Zealand where out of the 121 MPs, only 41 are female as opposed to the 80 males.

The second and final event I attended today was; *Engaging in Budget Advocacy for SRHR to Advance Sustainable Development (sponsored by Planned Parenthood Federation America)*. This was a parallel event, so was held at the Church Centre, opposite the UN Building. The structure of this parallel event was much more informal. The panelists spoke about how budgets for sexual and reproductive health and rights are low and not a priority area in Kenya. Abortion is also a criminal offence and there have been calls to change the abortion law to a reproductive rights law.

The key problem identified was lack of access to information about abortion. This made me consider SRHR in New Zealand, as it was an area I wasn't fully aware of. I found this discussion thought-provoking as I was curious to find out about budget advocacy for SRHR in NZ.

As the first week of CSW61 drew to a close, and official negotiations were underway, I reflected on the invaluable opportunities that I had encountered over the past week.

The Commission has been an invaluable opportunity to engage with high-level diplomats to discuss bilateral and multilateral issues.

It has also been a fantastic opportunity to broaden my horizons and actively participate in discussions where my voice was appreciated, and encouraged. It was a privilege to be invited to attend the Commission and needless to say, I have gained experiences that I could barely fathom at the young age of sixteen. I am looking forward to taking back the things I have learnt and the connections that I have made to New Zealand and using them as a platform to make realistic and positive change in my community.

As the youngest representative by several years, at times it was quite intimidating being called on to speak! However, I left the United Nations feeling incredibly proud to be a Kiwi. It was reassuring to hear the friendly calls of "*Kia Ora*" throughout the UN building during the day and being recognised by the greenstone around my neck. I have never felt prouder to be representing my country at such a high-profile event. What a humbling experience to be in the company of such accomplished people to discuss some of the world's most pressing issues in regards to gender equality!

Of course, being in the Big Apple meant that we took up every tourist opportunity possible! We visited the Empire State Building, Wall Street, the Stock Exchange, the Statue of Liberty, Times Square, Central Park, the Museum of Modern Art, and I even had the time to squeeze in a campus tour of Columbia University!

PWANZ Report - Mira Karunanidhi

It was a privilege to be invited to attend the 61st Commission on the Status of Women and needless to say, I have gained experiences that I could barely fathom at the young age of sixteen. The Commission left me brimming with ideas to take back to New Zealand in the hope of making realistic and positive change in my community.

Personal highlights for me included the Youth Forum. It was incredibly encouraging to see several young men among the sea of young women at the forum. I attended a parallel event titled; "*Listen. Learn. Engage. – Tools to Help Young Activists Affect Change*". I found this session the most useful as I learnt to differentiate between an advocate and an activist. Additionally, I was given the opportunity to share my goals for my community and write an action plan to take back to implement back home.

I particularly enjoyed the side events at the Commission as it meant more opportunities to speak up and contribute as well as gaining valuable perspectives from people from all around the world! Another highlight was a side event titled; "*Social norms, gender equality and the empowerment of young people hosted by UK and Denmark*." I was very lucky to get into this event as the demand for the session was incredibly high. Being considerably younger than the thousands of people at the conference proved to be of use! I had the privilege of speaking in this session when the moderator asked for a perspective from a young person in the room. The youth activist, Emma Holten was a panelist in this session and her impassioned speech left me incredibly inspired.

I have an avid interest in politics and I was further fascinated by a ministerial roundtable led by UN Under Secretary General and Executive Director of UN Women, Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka titled; "*Equality in Politics: Another 50 years to reach 50-50?*"

I found this session particularly interesting as women in politics is one of the topics I am most passionate about.

Again, I was privileged enough to be able to speak at this session and engage in the Q&A.

This session left me bursting with ideas to implement in New Zealand to encourage political participation in young girls. I learnt that only three parliaments in the world have 50% or more women MPs in one of their chambers. This made me consider the House of Representatives in New Zealand where out of the 121 MPs, only 41 are female as opposed to the 80 males.

The Commission has been an invaluable opportunity to broaden my horizons and actively participate in discussions where my voice was appreciated, and encouraged. What a humbling experience to be in the company of such accomplished people to discuss some of the world's most pressing issues in regards to gender equality!

Upon my return to New Zealand, I co-organised the United Nations Girl Up Wellington Leadership Summit with local politicians such as Chloe Swarbrick as a guest speaker.

Additionally, I have shared my experiences at school and local community groups such as the Methodist Women. I look forward to utilising the friends and connections I have made at the UN to further advocate for women's rights.

The fantastic women in the PWANZ delegation and the lovely Carol Grant made this experience my most enjoyable one yet and I am grateful for the opportunity.

Chitra Karunanidhi

I accompanied my daughter Mira Karunanidhi as a PWANZ delegate to attend the 61st Commission on Status of Women held in New York earlier this year. It was a lifetime opportunity to meet, talk and listen to some inspiring women from different parts of the world and from different walks of life.

Watching my daughter relishing this opportunity and interacting with other delegates was the highlight for me.

However, it was an insightful experience to learn that how much I can contribute to the empowerment of women and particularly young girls in New Zealand. Small steps we take in our own profession and everyday life may be mundane but meaningful to the women facing various socioeconomic challenges.

It highlighted the privileged position I am in in comparison to millions of women around the world and also underscored the challenges we all as women face irrespective of our position and privilege and most importantly why it is vital for all of us to find our voice and articulate our perspective as women.

Specifically I was inspired by the following sessions;

Gender equality and gender stereotypes and social norms of youth. Karen Ellman, Minister of equal opportunities, Denmark, talked about increasing roles of social media affecting the norms in young digital natives.

In the same forum, a young Activist Emma Holten left me inspired with her passionate speech on revenge pornography. Perhaps, a campaign could be promoted and launched

in NZ against this topical issue similar to the Video Campaign- "disrespect nobody" in the UK.

Political empowerment in young women and creating awareness and importance of young girls engaging in Science and Technology were two other sessions I enjoyed immensely.

Finally, the icing on the cake was the breakfast meeting at the NZ mission where I had the chance to meet some of the like minded women from NZ with so much energy and passion.

I am grateful and thank Carol Grant and PWANZ for giving us the opportunity. I returned Empowered, Engaged and Entertained after this life changing trip.

Kate Saxton

It has now been six months since I attended CSW 61 at the United Nations in New York and I still find myself talking about the experience on an almost daily basis.

I went into the trip with not much of an idea about what to expect – I really underestimated the size and power of the commission and didn't fully grasp the variety of sessions that would be on offer. I found the best approach was to plan ahead and select sessions that I thought would be of most relevance and interest to me personally, prioritise them and then fit in whatever else I could around those.

Some of the sessions that I enjoyed the most included hearing the new Secretary-General speak (although it was a shame it wasn't Helen Clark!) and attending the launch of the call for equal pay for women in the General Assembly Hall.

The latter was a particularly motivating and uplifting night, and I was especially inspired by hearing from former US professional footballer Abby Wambach. Her story made the call for equal pay easy to understand and made me realise how much I had taken for granted about that particular issue until now.

Another session that stood out was run by the International Association of Women Judges and involved six judges from various countries around the world discussing cases from their courts that centred on issues affecting women.

Given my legal background and experience working in NZ courts, I found this session extremely fascinating.

Meeting people from all around the world and hearing their stories made me realise how lucky we are to live in a country like NZ, however it also made me think about things we could do better – and there are many!

The diverse make-up of the PWANZ delegation assisted with this and I found it beneficial and inspiring to be able to reflect upon, and discuss, the day's learnings with our group of amazing women at the end of each day. Being able to draw upon such a wide range of prior experiences and opinions really enhanced the value of attending CSW.

There were certainly some challenges along the way, the least of which was navigating New York in a blizzard! I found that an open mind and challenging my own ways of thinking allowed me to overcome any obstacles successfully, and I in fact enjoyed the challenge of that process. I don't think I will ever forget being in an NGO session which was interrupted by a native American protesting against the Dakota pipeline.

She was not allowed to enter the UN itself so had come wherever she could get a platform, and spoke incredibly passionately about issues I had never even considered before.

Other sessions I chose to attend focussed on issues closer to home for a New Zealander, for example indigenous women's empowerment and investment in refugees. Both of these really made me think about the way women from ethnic or cultural minorities are treated in NZ and in particular I made a conscious decision to do what I could to improve this in my own life.

Attending the UN gave me a huge amount of confidence and empowerment to actually get out there and do something rather than just sitting around talking about some of the issues facing women.

While I had always considered myself relatively proactive, I have dramatically increased the amount of time and energy I devote to improving the lives of women in whatever way I can. I find myself speaking out a lot more about issues I feel passionate about relating to women, particularly in my workplace.

I am now the co-chair of the Women's Advisory Network at the Royal NZ Police College and have gathered support from executive leaders in the work that I am doing in that space. I am one of three organisers, and a facilitator, for a NZ Police Women's Leadership Conference to be held in early November in Wellington targeted at 140 actual, and potential, leaders from around the country.

In my personal life, I am now a volunteer coach for the girls' class at the Cannons Creek Boxing Academy which involves mentoring, supporting and guiding girls aged 9-14 years who are mostly of Maori and Pacific Island descent to be the best that they can be. This role is the single most rewarding thing I have undertaken in my life and I do not believe I would have had the confidence, knowledge or ability had I not attended the UN.

Attending CSW61 was truly a once in a lifetime experience, and an opportunity for which I will be forever grateful. The combination of the wonderful women who formed the PWANZ delegation (and in particular the one who led it), the learnings and reflections from the conference itself, and two weeks of fun adventures in NYC certainly made this a trip to remember and one that I will carry with me for the rest of my life.

Lyn Heine

This was my third time being part of the Presbyterian Women of Aotearoa New Zealand delegation led by Rev Carol Grant. The differences I noted were that I was less pressured and more discerning about what I attended; more aware of how things were proceeding; and more able to inform and assist others to find their way around and participate well. A special finding for me this time was the discovery of the Meditation Room in the UN building. A small room with subdued lighting and designed and decorated by Dag Hammarskjöld. A place that UN leaders and visitors across the years have come to sit and pray and contemplate the issues facing them and their organisation.

Of note was the expressed anger of the US American NGO women with regard to policies being put forward and implemented from their federal government. Even though by then the travel ban was not in place, the threat and uncertainty around it meant that many from the banned countries did not travel to CSW61. At many of the sessions there was a symbolic empty chair to represent these women. And when it was reported that the US member state delegation was recommending that the US withdraw from the Commission on the grounds that it promoted abortion and lesbianism, the NGO women were quite vocal in their outrage.

Stand out themes and presentations for me were the Cities For All, an Interactive Media workshop and the more present voice of Indigenous Women.

The Cities For All was a panel presentation of high quality speakers looking at the key questions of what makes a city good? and what are cities for?

It came from the premise that cities hold within them answers to their challenges.

A stand-out idea for me was the Vancouver initiative that had their recycling done under cover by their street people.

The Interactive Media workshop was an NGO media organisation that works with local communities and their groups to address their issue of concern. Their contribution is to put the issue into story and drama form with the local people and invite public community feedback. Issues of gender based violence; gender roles and responsibilities; parenting and health would have graphic picture form stories written, or radio dramas and then people would be invited to respond to questions asked. e.g. What do you think of how Juan treated Juanita? A bit like talkback radio.

I'm unsure if I was more aware of indigenous women's voices or if, in fact, there was an increased presence and response. They seemed to me to be more ready to use the opportunities to speak at presentations and raise their issues.

The make-up of our PWANZ delegation was powerful in the representation from different sectors of our society – Local Government, Media, NGO, Police, and Church. It was impressive, and recognised as being a particularly strong delegation within NZ circles. We were once again hosted to a breakfast at the NZ UN mission based in New York.

Having a delegation has meant that there is an increased awareness of issues and therefore an informed ability to speak out in a wide range of circles – from the St Columba pupils and their projects to media awareness; within health, education and civic society settings to public service. The networks and relationships formed give encouragement and are, I think, an investment into future attitudes and development in NZ as a whole as well as into the PCANZ.

Pressures that are being put on CSW appear to be coming from those opposed to progress in gender and human rights; and moves to reduce the role and ability of NGOs to be the activist and advocacy voice in our society are widespread. Nationally we see this with the financial pressures put on NGO services and often a non-advocacy stipulation that comes with funding provided, and globally this is also the case.

The NZ contribution to CSW is as part of the whole and is generally a respected voice. We were challenged on both our domestic violence statistics and our legalised acceptance of prostitution and it has been a disappointment to me that we have been less than honest in presenting these in our member state submissions. Where Australia makes statements such as "we are killing our babies at a rate of . . ." nz states it acknowledges "it has problems".

Learnings shared within my own civic society involvements, my faith-based involvements and starting conversations with local government around Cities For Complete Elimination Of Discrimination Against Women have all been informed by my experiences of being present at CSW as part of PWANZ. I will always be grateful for the privileged opportunity to have been part of this and for the light-handed, encouraging leadership of Carol Grant.

Please know that the continued presence of PWANZ at the CSW table is a blessing to each individual who goes; to the delegation as a whole and the wider NZ delegation; and then back into future life in NZ itself.

Helen Speirs

I was extremely fortunate to have the opportunity to attend the 61st Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations headquarters in New York earlier this year as part of the PWANZ delegation.

This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, that offered so much and delivered on that promise.

As a senior journalist, the visit offered a unique insider's view into the workings of the UN, its people, procedures, policy-making and principles. The stories I heard from and about other women were courageous and inspirational. I could not help but come back much better informed about a great number of issues, and more understanding of differences and challenges, and inspired to be part of a global network of women making a difference in their relationships, workplaces, communities and countries.

It was a fascinating time to travel, under the new Trump administration, which had started enacting its travel bans. It was concerning to learn of the experiences of those denied entry, of those fearful under the new government, and of those who face similar and worse injustices in their own countries. I was proud to protest in the street - and in the snow! - with other women in defence of fundamental human rights.

As a woman, it felt amazing to be part of a predominantly female group, with a different dynamic to the usual working relationships I am used to. I found this to be inspiring, thoughtful, inclusive and supportive, and the experience has helped me to feel more confident of my voice in the workplace and elsewhere and more determined to push for change where possible.

I enjoyed the experience of being with PWANZ and meeting women from the church, my community, elsewhere in New Zealand and further afield - many of whom I might not have otherwise met. I have come back with some firm friendships, and a new network of amazing women to call on for support, advice, ideas and opportunities and to share the same with.

I can honestly say this has been a genuinely life-changing and eye-opening experience. I think and talk about many aspects of the trip often, and have been trying to use my experience for the better personally and professionally - for myself and others.

I have given a couple of talks to groups about the trip since my return. I have also written a two-part feature about the experience and the work of the Commission, which was published to a wide audience in print and online in the Otago Daily Times and New Zealand Herald. They can be read here: <https://www.odt.co.nz/lifestyle/magazine/women-united-part-1>

I am committed to "paying it forward", and forever grateful to Carol for approaching me to be part of her group. I hope I have done her and PWANZ proud!

Thank you once again for this incredible opportunity.

Rebekah Kitto

March 2017 is a time that I will look back with great fondness, life changing, rewarding and challenging.

Being able to be part of the PWANZ delegation was a great privilege and to be given that opportunity to represent them at the CSW16 in New York was amazing.

I have always had a passion for equality for all. I come from an upbringing in Auckland that was very diverse with not only strong women around me but I was also immersed into many different cultures. I always stood up for those that were the so called 'underdog' and those that needed support.

My trip to the CSW61 has only strengthened my passion for equality.

While at the CSW61 I was determined to make the most of my time there and immerse myself into the conference.

The trip gave me the opportunity to hear from influential and inspirational women, men and world leaders in their fight for women around the world and women equality. It was amazing to be surrounded by like minded supporters from all around the world.

My main focus was attending events which were Police work related events. My focus was on violence against women and what other countries and organisations were doing to combat this. This was a huge subject and many NGO led events and UN side events were focused on this.

I sometimes found it was quite overwhelming due to the amount that was on offer and was only possible to attend a few events a day.

I found myself at events where organisations talked about the impact they have made in women's lives. I was listening to judges, leaders of major organisations, church groups and government representatives.

I came back empowered, energised and enthused with ideas and new skills that would help me make a positive difference for women in the police and women and men that I deal with on a daily basis through work.

On my return to work I took over as the lead at work for the Otago Coastal Women's Advisory Network (WAN). I am a firm believer that a strong WAN will lead to a better workplace for females in the police.

While at the UN I heard the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterre speak. He made it clear that to get advancement for women you need to have 'good men' on your side. You need men to stand up for women. There were many males at this event who were fighting for equality and this gave me a focus that when I was back at work I needed to identify males in our organisation and recruit them into the WAN.

Under my leadership the WAN committee had grown to now over 25 members including a significant number of men. It is now a better representation of the police in the area. There has almost been a chain reaction, when one male was involved more and more have enquired about being involved which is amazing. Now my focus is on how the WAN can keep its momentum and build it from strength to strength.

The UN have a focus to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls and have set a date of 50/50 equality by year 2030. It was great to hear how far women have come over 61 years however it has been slow moving. Females have been in the police for 75 years and like global female equality it has been slow moving. Police now have a goal to have 50% women recruits going through the police college by 2020.

Hopefully when we see the flow on from this our organisation will have a better culture and understanding of gender diversity and they are in a better place to support out women now and into the future.

I met some amazing women while I was in New York. I enjoyed the friendships that I have formed from being part of the PWANZ delegation. We got to share our day and experiences with each other, not only from the conference but our experiences and sight-seeing in New York. On one morning we were invited to a breakfast at the New Zealand Permanent Mission to the UN. It was great to meet members of other NGO delegations and the view for breakfast was amazing.

One of my favourite nights at the conference was seeing a movie from Pakistan called Dukhtar (The Daughter). It was amazing and gave me an insight into life in Pakistan for young females. It was about child brides and was a movie that I do not believe I would have experienced if I was not at the UN.

Another highlight was meeting Equal Employment Opportunities Commissioner Dr Jackie Blue. Had I not been in New York I don't think I would have ever had the privilege of meeting her here in New Zealand.

I would love to be part of this experience again. My thoughts are that towards the end of the first week I was only just starting to get the hang of what I was actually doing there. It could be quite overwhelming at times with multiple events happening during the day or even at the same time.

Thank you Carol for the opportunity to be a part of the PWANZ delegation for 2017. It was truly a huge life changing event to be a part of and I will be inspired to do more for females in the world for many years to come.

Rachel Tombs

In March 2017 it was my pleasure to be part of the PWANZ delegation to CSW at the UN. This was an experience which was simultaneously energising and exhausting, active and reflective, collective and personal. There was a lot going on and for the first two days my biggest challenge was figure out how they whole thing worked. Initially the multiple programmes made my head spin. Despite being somewhat overwhelmed at the start, by the end of the first week I was loving my new routine. I would leave from my aunt and uncle's home in Brooklyn around 7am, spend the day at the UN attending sessions run by both the NGOs and Member states and then return home around 8pm. The days were packed, and I learnt so much from the various sessions, to describe everything would be a mission. So when I am reflecting on the most significant aspects of the experience 6 months later, I'll stick to three things that stand out as lasting impacts for me.

Every day when I got home my teenage cousins sat around the table asking questions about the day, engaging with some of the issues and questions that came up in the sessions and sharing some of their own experiences.

The sessions I had attended included older women, some who had been to CSW many times and some newbies like me. This was one of the most rewarding aspects for me, seeing women of all ages eager to be involved in their future and the future of their sisters and feeling like you were passing it on to those coming after you.

Although I didn't have lots of down time, when I did I really enjoyed the quiet of the UN chapel across the road from the main building. One highlight for me was being involved in leading worship there one Tuesday morning with other members of WSCF.

The voice of the Ecumenical Women's group in the UN is strong. In this way CSW has re energised my belief that the church has a critical role in the transformation of society. This includes being advocates for justice for all people, which means putting ourselves out there in processes like CSW internationally and at home.

Thirdly the task of gender equality is vast. At times overwhelming. The women who I heard from and met at CSW were and are doing amazing things. They are changing the world. But not one of them is doing everything. If there's one tip I went home with it was, when taking action for gender equality: individually have a little bit of focus and collectively have a whole lot of teamwork. Hold each other up, support communal causes and be a microphone for other women's ideas. But don't get burdened trying to do it all, find your thing, dream big but start small. Lots of women taking steps from small to big added all together is how change is made.

The UN Secretary General invited members of civil society to be the hot coals under the feet of the government, putting pressure on them to keep moving forward and uphold the promises they have made. Post CSW 61 the starting point for me was to try to gain a sense of what it is exactly the NZ government have signed up to regarding gender equality in the Agreed Conclusions. I want to be able to recognise when they make decisions through inaction or action, which are contrary to this commitment and hopefully find ways, small or big to challenge this.

The CSW61 was an amazing experience. I am very grateful to Carol for the opportunity and really enjoyed the time I spent with the rest of PWANZ delegation. While I was warmed by the work being done by women and NGOs all over the world. And seeing how much work there is still to be done for gender equality has gotten me keen to roll up my sleeves.

Chiquita Holden

As I reflect on the once in a lifetime trip to New York as part of the CSW61 PWANZ delegation I know that I am forever changed. Surrounded by wonderful women from all around the world sharing their knowledge, skills and experience was insightful, life changing and inspiring. I'm incredibly thankful and grateful to have had this opportunity and know that it is something to continually reflect on to have ongoing personal growth from it - I have to pinch myself sometimes to remember that I was lucky enough to have actually had that experience!

The sessions were a mixture of challenge, inspiration and sadness as you realise that in some ways we are very lucky in New Zealand and also that we have a long way to go. I really enjoyed the opportunity to visit the 6th precinct Police Station and the Manhattan Criminal Court, both interesting places not only for architecture but also being able to see behind the scenes meeting members of the bomb squad and attending court proceedings. On first arrival to New York, it was overwhelming, I recall Carol talking about this before leaving but I think I underestimated how this experience would impact on me. It felt like everything was familiar, but also foreign at the same time, scenes from TV and movies seemed to be everywhere in the city.

It was great to hear from the international panel of women judges, sessions on domestic violence and responses to social problems which I mostly attended due to my interest in this area. It often made me ponder about services back home, how well we are doing and other ideas that can improve services here, it helps to put things into global context which extends my thinking and has lead me to really wanting to know more and generates further ambition.

Since returning from the trip, I have been working full time and studying 3rd Year Social Work so I have been weaving my experiences through both learning and sharing with anyone who will listen. One of the biggest changes for me personally is that it is so important to help other women, I don't recall Carol's exact words but prior to us leaving she said something about "holding the door open for other women" and that has stuck with me. It is so important to empower women and to do what I can to help them get them develop and grow and for me to share experiences and knowledge I have gained from being part of this trip, and what I do in the future.

Thank you so much to Carol Grant, PWANZ and the wonderful people I met, this will stay with me forever.

Sue Bidrose

March, in New York, is cold. I hadn't ever been, and the stories and warnings were not enough to ready me for the blizzard, the snow piled high at roadsides. With Manhattan's huge multi story buildings, the roads don't see sun and that snow remained there for 10 days. It made getting across the road, through a snow pile on each side, treacherous but just added to the excitement!

I have done several presentations since I returned, talking with community organisations about the delegation. People are very interested in what goes on at the UN. It was great to explain how we NGO women got to see the formal session in action. How UN Sec Gen Antonio Gutierrez was amazing, and how his woman Exec Director Phumzile Mlambo Ngcuka was inspiring, driven and strong.

And as well as the formal UN gatherings to develop New Zealand's position and hear that of other countries, local audiences have been delighted to hear about the literally hundreds of 'parallel sessions' arranged by NGOs and faith-based women from most countries that were there. We all attended some that were scheduled, and others that just popped up. NZ Government (led by Jo Goodhew in place of Paula Bennett) presented on NZ's progress, and other countries did too. CEOs presented, and human rights lawyers. And refugee women from Lebanon talked about educating children in refugee camps. There were sessions on social media (some of my favourites), FGM, child abduction and slavery, pay parity (odd to discuss this at an event where some countries only sent men, because women are not allowed to travel alone – I wondered how they coped!).

As a group, we all attended many sessions showcasing pilot projects in different countries. Some of the favourites nominated by our PWANZ team:

- Refugees in Lebanon, and the Palestinian/Syrian differences.
- On religious extremism and the rise of intolerance.
- Speak Out On Gender Justice session – people read letters from those who couldn't make it because of the travel ban.
- Water and women's international empowerment (a First Nations woman talking about coming to NZ to reclaim some tribal salmon!)
- City design to suit women and families (my favourite)
- Egypt/NZ presentation on empowering women with disabilities.

There was opportunity for making other connections while in New York, too. I went out with New Rochelle Council on one of the weekend days, and spent another day with the Global Street Design Initiative - saw their design guide in action, and Dunedin has just endorsed it for our own city.

I also went to Women and C40 – women leaders from 40 of the world's big cities explaining their climate change initiatives. No one city will change things, but all of us together will. There were other women there from the UN CSW as well, and it was great to compare and contrast the messages – and how similar the two sets of women are, taking exciting initiatives back home to change the world, town by town!

Jin Sook Kim - A sharing about learning and experience from CSW61

1. Things I wanted to learn and experience at CSW61

As a minister of PCANZ, I want to expand my horizon through meetings and sharing stories with women from all over the world. I believe that my personal case (a Korean immigrant woman) is one of examples of how biblical discourses can empower underprivileged women by liberating them from the dominant discourses in a society while living the truth revealed in Christ. I wanted to be a witness to the lives of women in the world to support their empowerment and to spread their testimonies of life in the Kingdom of God.

I intended to record those stories that I'd heard from women in CSW61 with the congregation and girls at school through sermons, bible studies and fellowships to begin with. Reading women's lives in light of Scripture where there is no discrimination before God¹ is an important first step to empower women which will change the dominant patriarchal discourses in the world.

In addition, the empowerment of women has to begin with educating women first since it is often women themselves who would oppose any changes of status quo after the prolonged indoctrination by the dominant patriarchal discourses. Unless women are able to see their true being through the eye of Christ, it will be a long way to achieve the empowerment of women.

Observations and learning

1. Overall impression – Protest psalms

My initial impression about the entire events including major UN women events, parallel events together with side events can be summarised as reading protest psalms in a global level. To sum, empowerment begins on a local level, and the starting point is one's self. The yearning for better life seems always rising from one's self. So when it reaches to the point of contact of the message of life (e.g. Scripture/UN women's projects), the self may gain the strength to overcome her own situation. She may also be able to move beyond to help others. This is repeatedly observed through various UN events including parallel events and side events. Specific examples of this were through the following events.

2. A role of education at Armenian church (15/3/2017)

- Vietnam: Self-sufficiency is the starting point of women's empowerment – case study; Educating one's self first and help others
- China: changes of forms of social communication; develop a concept of 'I' to 'we'; equality with unity (unity in diversity)
- Role of early education: despite the development of technologies, devices, teach children tolerance, acceptance; Insecurity deeply rooted in childhood becomes very destructive in adulthood; teach children to protect the environment including nature.

¹ Galatians 3:28

- Education: cultivate one's self is the starting point of education
 - One needs to live in peace before working for peace
 - Education for women's empowerment begins from self-awareness
 - Early education about human right & gender equality is important- fund, monitoring the fund, how to make it balanced.
3. A few 'successful' examples of 'women's economic empowerment which corresponds to the biblical truth e.g. the case of Bangladesh - "Women & Sustainable peace: Essential for the Human Rights to peace in Bangladesh,' 13 March, 3:00-4:15 pm Conference Room B
- Research – society which allows women's empowerment will attain peace
 - Women's right to human right is right to solidarity
 - To build up the nation, Bangladesh has endeavoured to increase women's equal participation in every sector of society
 - Bangladesh's female prime minister – Sheikh Hasina Wazed has been a champion of this movement
 - Bangladesh is a relatively young nation which only won independence from Pakistan in 1971. Since then, obstacles have been numerous, including the legacy of colonialism and the war of independence, and the challenges of safeguarding the world's eighth-largest population when it is crammed into a delta.
 - When women are empowered, the families become empowered and then the whole village is also empowered.
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FR7EgcD788E>

Overall learning

1. Women's empowerment not only corresponds to human rights but it is also directly related to scripture.
e.g. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself" (Luke 10:27). The former defines where a person's identity is ground, and the latter offers us the purpose of life.
2. Women's economic empowerment begins at a local level first. The very local level is one's self. As such empowering one's self is preceded by one's self awareness and restoring of self esteem.
3. Empowerment begins with awareness of one's identity. If women's identity is preconditioned by culture and social systems in which they are living, disruption of these preconditions often becomes a chance for them to re-define their identity.
4. When a woman is regained her self esteem, it enables her to change the environment and others' lives e.g. family first and then the village and so forth.

I have enjoyed all the learnings not only from UN events together with side and parallel events at the UN, but also from the PWANZ delegation. At the UN, I felt that I was a part of these small but strong voices in the world who shared one goal together - love your neighbour as yourself in their own way. I was able to identify how to follow your heart to live a happy life with others. Listening to those women's amazing journey may not be the one that I can easily have here. Learning about their culture and the overall living

conditions were part of learning too. In addition, being a member of the delegation was also great. Most evenings, we had meals together while debriefing what we have learned each day. I'm trying to employ what I have learned at CSW61 in my ministry.

Sa Siitia-'Asi

An impression I had about myself in New York was that *"I was a small fish in the sea"*. Nevertheless, it was my pleasure to be given the privilege to attend the 61st Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61) in March 2017. Firstly, I enjoyed the company of joining up with my fellow delegates representing the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand under the guidance and great leadership of the Rev Carol Grant (PWANZ UN Convenor).

The highlight of my time at the CSW was the important work of the CSW to accelerate the full and equal realisation of human rights for women and girls.

It is an inspiring, informative and entertaining event. It was a wonderful feeling, as a Pacific Island New Zealander, to see the multicultural presence of the CSW delegates, in the United Nation Building, with every flag held high. It was an excellent opportunity for me, to engage in a range of discussions and forums in relation to women's economic empowerment and the changing world of work, the theme of CSW61. However, much remains to be done.

I also participated in the Asia- Pacific caucuses. It was an opportunity for me to better understand the issues facing Asia- Pacific women and girls. I believe that more engaging with more Pacific NGOs prior to CSW in future years may help amplify voices from the Pacific, in particular around their advocacy on the impacts of violence and equal realisation of human rights for women and girls in every sphere of life.

I am committed to using the knowledge I obtained in New York, to raise awareness through inclusive consultations, workshops and seminars. On 27 April 2017 I was invited by the Samoan Minister's Fraternal to speak at their retreat on the topic of "Removing Gender Barriers in Pacific Island Samoan Parishes. " My knowledge of the 30 principles of human rights was an excellent resource in the presentation. It was well received and appreciated and as a result a plan of action of workshops are proposed for the Fono Samoa Parishes of the PIC Synod.

In conclusion I would like to thank the Convenor Rev Carol Grant, my fellow delegates for your companionship and friendship. Last but not the least I am forever grateful to the PCWANZ for the given opportunity to this amazing experience.



Ministry of Women International Caucus Meeting - November 2017

The NZ Ministry for Women International Caucus Meeting NGO leaders gathered in November 2017 with the new Minister for Women, the Hon. Julie Anne Genter. Julie Anne is also Associate Minister for Transport and Health. This meeting, hosted by the Ministry for Women focuses on preparing the Government and NGO's for the Commission on the Status of Women As NGO leaders. We all look forward to Julie Anne's support as the issues facing women and girls in New Zealand are highlighted nationally and internationally at every level.



The Ministry for Women, Te Minitatanga mō ngā Wāhine, is the Government's principal advisor on achieving better results for women, and wider New Zealand. The Ministry has four priority areas: more women in education and training; utilising women's skills; more women in leadership and keeping women free from violence.

The Ministry's main responsibilities are:

- Policy advice on improving outcomes for women in New Zealand
- Managing New Zealand's international reporting obligations in relation to the status of women
- Providing suitable women nominees for appointment to state sector boards and committees
- Providing support services to the Minister for Women.

The Ministry carries out its work by acting as a catalyst for action and change, and by getting key issues on the agenda of government agencies and other relevant organisations. The Ministry provides accessible, evidence-based information to inform and assist others. The Ministry is strongly solutions-focused, with advice that is tailored and persuasive. The Ministry carries out its work by bringing the voices, experiences and priorities of different groups of New Zealand women to government. It also works closely with other government agencies, women's non-government organisations and stakeholders within the private sector.

The Ministry's work will bring benefits to women, their families and New Zealand as a whole.

The Rev Carol L Grant JP.
United Nations Convenor 2017