

May 2011  
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## Brenda Returns as a Pioneer Priest

*Lloyd Ashton writes:*

When Brenda Reed Sio went home to Apia after the Diocese of Polynesia's Synod earlier this month, she returned as a pioneer – the first woman priest to be ministering on Samoan soil.

Brenda was one of nine candidates ordained to the Anglican priesthood at a standing-room-only service at Suva's Holy Trinity Cathedral on Sunday, May 1.

"My journey to ordination has been challenging," she says. "But heartwarming too, because the service of ordination is a public declaration of God's call on my life for His ministry for the people of God in Samoa..."

"I am humbled as a woman to join the ranks of a male-dominated field of ministry."

That Suva service also served as the launch of the Diocese of Polynesia's synod. Brenda was on deck throughout for those proceedings, which wrapped up on Thursday night.

And at that synod, another All Saint's Apia ex-pat, the Revd Dr Frank Smith – who is the Dean of the College of Polynesia, the Auckland Anglican theological college for Pacific students – publicly praised Brenda's ordination, and noted its significance.

He noted that the refusal of Christian denominations in Samoa to allow women to be ordained "arises from a particular way of interpreting scriptures... which perpetuates male domination in the church."

"I think Brenda's ordination is prophetic. It's a symbolic act of liberation for the Samoan church." Brenda will be ministering as a non-stipendary (unpaid) priest at All Saint, Apia – which is the church she was baptized, raised in, has been a member of all her life and in which she's held a wide range of leadership roles. She'll be the priest assistant to the Vicar of All Saints, Fr Peniamini Tapelu.

Brenda will also keep her day jobs. She's Principal of Mrs Reed's Preschool at Papauta, and she does consulting work in both health and nutrition.

"I know the road ahead won't be easy," says Brenda, "but I praise and thank God for the love, support and encouragement of our Archbishop, Rev Dr Winston Halapua, my church family at All Saint's Apia, and my own family."

"I feel I have arrived at a blessed place."



Sisters together in celebration of Brenda Sio & Ema Hala'api'api ordinations as priest and deacon respectively in Suva. From Left: Revd Tai Tuatagaloa, Revd Carole Hughes, Revd Brenda Sio, Revd Amy Chambers & Revd Ema Hala'api'api

*Footnote:* Brenda is the second Samoan woman to be ordained to the Anglican priesthood. The first is Archdeacon Taimalelagi Tuatagaloa (pictured above), who ministers in Auckland.

# From the United Nations 55th Commission on the Status of Women

*Reverend Sarah Stevens writes:*

Women in New Zealand under 55 have more tertiary degrees than their brothers. One year after leaving university however, there is a 6% income gap between men and women which will grow to 17% within 5 years. Huge gaps in work participation levels also exist between men and women.

This is according to Rowena Phair, CEO of the New Zealand Ministry of Women's Affairs. Rowena spoke at the United Nations 55th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW55) which I attended in February and March.

Education is vital for women's empowerment, Rowena said, but it is not enough to break down the complex and often subtle barriers to women's participation in the workforce. Similarly, Anne Kauta, from the Kiribati Ministry of Women's Affairs said that education must be relevant to the context from which a woman comes. She gave the example of a woman from Kiribati who was offered a scholarship to study food technology. This was a wonderful opportunity, but not much use in a country which does not have any food processing or packaging plants.

The Commission on the Status of Women is an annual event at the United Nations in New York. Alongside delegations from the UN member state governments, more than 1,000 women (and a few men) from Non-Governmental Organisations across the globe (NGOs) attended this year. I was part of the Anglican Consultative Council delegation of 20 women from around the world.

The priority theme this year was: "Access and participation of women and girls in education, training, science and technology, including the promotion of women's equal rights to full employment and decent work".

After two weeks of negotiation and lobbying, a nine page recommendation document was produced. To summarise this briefly, the conclusions:

- ⇒ Support all UN declarations, the Millennium development goals and poverty elimination
- ⇒ Call for gender equality in all areas, i.e. labour, home, government
- ⇒ Promote the education of the girl child at all levels - pre-school to tertiary
- ⇒ State that Science and Technology must be an open field to women
- ⇒ Call for an end of violence, discrimination and bullying towards women in all areas of society

CSW 55 also reviewed progress on the theme from five years ago: "The elimination of all forms of violence against the girl child".

I was in New York at the time of the Canterbury Earthquake. It was moving to see and hear first hand the love, concern and prayers for New Zealand of women around the world.



## UN Women

UN Women was established in July 2010. This UN entity for gender equity and the empowerment of women brings together four smaller entities and will raise the profile and volume of calls for gender justice and help to channel funds towards this goal and the empowerment of women. Former Chilean President and Minister of Defence, Michelle Bachelet is the Executive Director and Under Secretary General for UN Women. Much hope has been placed in her leadership.

## Pacific Women's Watch (New Zealand)

This NZ based organisation is seeking strategies for action to empower Pacific Women's political participation internationally. No Pacific Island nations are represented in the 10 Asia Pacific seats on the UN Women executive board. This will be followed up through the Pacific Island Forum in the hope that Pacific leaders will work to promote and encourage their women into these international positions. New Zealand and Australia are not part of this UN grouping – but are grouped with "Western Europe and others".

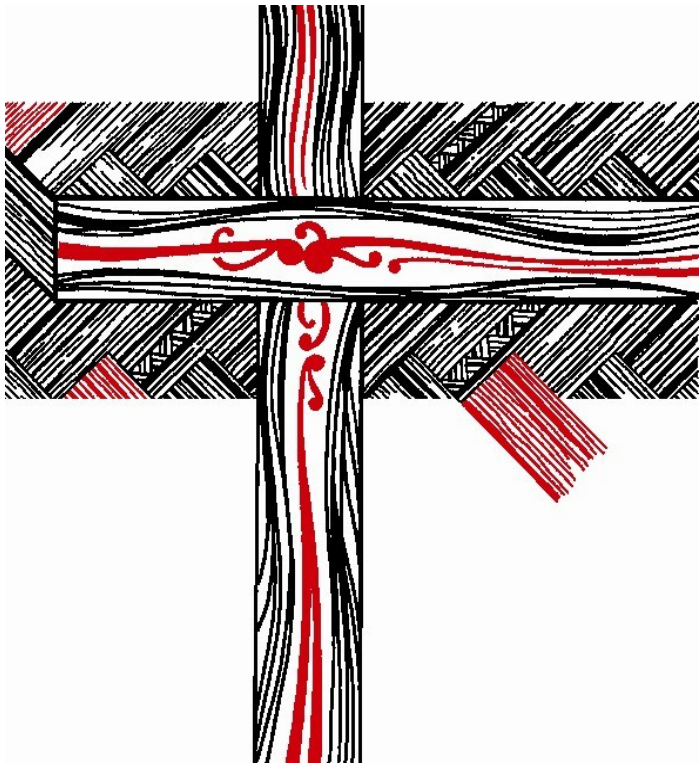
## Security Council Resolution 1325

This resolution passed in 2000 calls for women to be involved at all levels of conflict prevention, management and resolution. But has not become a reality. Peace making organisations are pushing for it to be enacted more widely. Women's presence at the peace making table provides balanced view points and perspectives. Women often remain at home during conflict while their men are off fighting. As a result, they know the needs of their communities, both emotionally and physically when the rebuilding process begins.

Biologically the presence of women makes a huge difference too. Rather than just adrenaline – the "fight or flight" stress

*To be continued on Page 4*

**Announcing**  
**WOMEN IN MINISTRY PROVINCIAL HUI**  
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If you would like to receive more information regarding this Hui please contact  
your Link Representative in your Diocese or Hui Amorangi  
to register your interest

*(refer back page for contact details of the Link Representative in your area)*

***Thursday, 27th—Saturday, 29th October 2011***  
***Vaughan Park Retreat Centre, Auckland***



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response hormone, women also produce oxytocin – the “tend or befriend” hormone associated with lactation and labour. When women are present, men also produce more oxytocin.

### **Maternal Mortality**

Dr Kaosar Afsana, from BRAC Bangladesh spoke of the success her organisations Health Programme had experienced using mobile phones to help poor and rural women access medical advice during pregnancy. A quick phone call could help them decide whether to seek advice is person which could be up to three days travel away. Could such a programme also work in the Pacific?

### **Human Trafficking**

At any one time around the World 12.3 million people are trafficked into forced labour, bonded labour and sexual servi-



Anglican Delegates from across the Communion gather at a New York subway

tude at any given time. The majority of these are women.

While abolitionist brought about an end to legal slavery in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, trafficking is the modern day slavery and it is a problem all over the globe.

While the New Zealand governments official stance is that we don't have a problem with human trafficking, The US State Department describes New Zealand as a destination country for human trafficking, and reports situations of debt bondage and confiscation of document among women in prostitution. The problem is only likely to get worse in during the Rugby World Cup.

At CSW I attended a session, run by the New York based Urban Justice Centre. Lawyers, advocates and activists spoke of women who were promised work and forced into prostitution, or made to work for little or no pay. Men and women terrified of their employers and the authorities, often denied access to their passports and unable to escape.

One panellist told the story of a suburban mother, who noticed that her immigrant neighbour was often in the garden, wandering aimlessly around and never left the property. The neighbour's actions seemed strange; she appeared to live without freedom or autonomy. As the young mother gradually befriended her neighbour she gained her trust, and was able to help her out of domestic bondage.

The message was clear: If you have a suspicion about trafficking in connection with someone you know, trust it!

Then I heard about a chain of nail salons in Long Island which had been prosecuted for bringing women from Asia and forcing them to work for little or no pay not only as manicurists but also as prostitutes. A quick internet search of American newspapers revealed to me that the problem is wide spread across the US. And I started to think about the sense of discomfort I have had in some nail salons in New Zealand. The panellist words continue to ring in my ears. “If you have a suspicion about something like this...trust it.” Do not assume anything or make accusations, but be there, ask questions and listen. I seek to do just that.

### **Religions for Peace**

I became aware while in New York that faith is a powerful motivator for women around the world who are working for peace and justice. Whatever our religion, it can be an incredible source of inspiration and nourishment for those who seek to support and empower others. Organisations like “Religions for Peace” are a good example of how we can work together for the common good.

### **What about our brothers?**

This question was often asked by western women in their late teens and early 20s at CSW. Living with a comparatively high level of empowerment these women realise that women's empowerment must not at the expense of our men. Breaking down gender stereotypes must also involve exploring positive masculinities and partnerships between men and women.

### **Gender Budgeting**

Gender Budgets are the general budgets of any organisation planned, monitored and carried out to ensure that money is spent in a gender sensitive way. That is, to make sure that women, men and children are all treated fairly. While these budgets are of particular value when an organisation is working for the elimination of poverty, I understand that ACC has encouraged all church groups at provincial, national, diocesan and parish levels to consider gender budgeting in their planning. As such, I was surprised not to have heard about it in the context of our province. I wonder if there are any ministry units, diocese or hui amorangi in this province who consciously consider how their spending choices influence women and men.

### **International Anglican Women's Network (IAWN)**

I met and spent time with Anglican women from around the world and heard about the different (and also, so often similar) challenges we face in our different ministry contexts. I was in-

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the IAWN gets through to the women doing ministry in some of our most isolated locations and not lost in the sea of information we are exposed to through technology today? It is important, I think, to ensure that this and other international networks are wide open and easy to access by all interested people.

My deep thanks and appreciation to the Archbishops and General Synod of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia who funded my travel to New York and participation in the 55<sup>th</sup> Commission on the Status of Women; and to the Tikanga Pakeha representatives of the Women's Studies Centre who facilitated this experience.

- Cited in "Human Trafficking: Freeing Women, Children and Men a booklet published by Anglican Women's Empowerment.
- The minister's forward to "The Plan of Action to Prevent People Trafficking" states that 'New Zealand has no known experience of trafficking' cited on <http://www.dol.govt.nz/publications/research/people-trafficking/index.asp>, April 4, 2011.
- [http://www.humantrafficking.org/countries/new\\_zealand](http://www.humantrafficking.org/countries/new_zealand)



Anglican Women delegates met for dinner

spired by the commitment and passion of the Anglican women I met and learnt a lot about the work of Anglican Women's Empowerment (a US based group with a focus on international women's issues) and the International Anglican Women's Network (IAWN).

I represented The Reverend Carole Hughes, our New Zealand link to this network at a meeting of IAWN link women. I was excited by the potential power of this network and the scope of possibilities for working together across the globe. I was left however with two abiding questions: How do we ensure the needs of all Anglican women are served by this international network? How do we ensure that this information and access to

Sarah is Priest Assistant at Holy Trinity Cathedral in Auckland. She is very willing to talk to groups about her experience. Please contact her at [sarah@holy-trinity.org.nz](mailto:sarah@holy-trinity.org.nz)



## A Final Look....

A birds-eye view of Brenda Sio's ordination in Suva at the Diocese of Polynesia Synod.



## WOMEN'S STUDIES CENTRE

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The 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.

**New Email  
Address**

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 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.



### Women's Studies Centre Council Members — 2010/2012

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#### Hui Amorangi o te Upoko o te Ika

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#### Hui Amorangi o te Waipounamu

- *No current appointment—Contact Mere Wallace (see above)*