



WOMEN OF FAITH CHANGING THE WORLD

What is Beijing Circles? A little history...

In 2004 the UN Observer to the United Nations, Tai Matalavea, put out a call for help to raise money and host a group of Anglican women from around the world to come to a meeting at the UN. That meeting, the Commission on the Status of Women, takes place for 2 weeks every year and brings thousands of women from NGOs around the world to NY to look at, discuss, and write reports on a theme taken from the Beijing Platform for Action. This platform forms the basis of the work centered in the Division for the Advancement of Women at the UN and so became the focus of the Anglican women attending.

Phoebe Griswold answered that call and with Tai formed a partnership with support from the Office of Women's Ministries at the Episcopal and AWE, Anglican Women's Empowerment, was born. AWE has been the driving force behind the Anglican delegation working in collaboration with the UN office for the past 5 years as a catalyst for empowerment. In 2009, under the leadership of a new Anglican Observer, Hellen Wangusa, this work will continue.

While the UNCSW always has an international focus, women from the Episcopal Church who attended recognized that while the issues of the platform are critical to changing the culture for women abroad, we have the same issues here at home. The idea of Beijing Circles was formed from that knowledge as a way to bridge local and global action at a grass roots level in parishes across the country.

Susanne Watson Epting was contracted to write a resource guide to help us work in small groups to reflect, discuss and pray about the issues of the Beijing Platform and then discern from that experience what actions to take.

There are 6 essential elements to Beijing Circles:

- Grounded in faith—our resource has been written from a Christian perspective however we would welcome other faith to engage with this resource and help create an interfaith version
- The circle—the circle is the process which allows all voices to be heard and creates the space for the Holy Spirit to speak
- Local & global action—looking at the relationships between a particular issue on both the local and global stage
- Gender specific—focus on women as the bearers of a disproportionate share of the world's burdens and having the gifts to do something about that
- Rooted in the UN—The Platform for Action was forged at the 4th Womens World Conference in Beijing in 1995 – 5 years before the Millennium Declaration
- Education/Reflection/Action model—educating ourselves about the issues-reflecting on the implications which leads to action which leads to more education and around we go



*The CIRCLE is the PROCESS
and the BEIJING PLATFORM
is the CONTENT.*