This past Thursday, March 8, was International Women’s Day, a day of remembrance and reflection celebrated around the world since 1913. The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women has convened annually since 1946 on March 8 to promote women’s political, economic, civil, social, and educational rights and empowerment. This year, the UN Commission on the Status of Women met February 27 - March 9, to reflect on the empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication and development.

How has the Episcopal Church responded to the call to care for women and girls as part of this global conversation? Anglican women have participated in the UN Commission on the Status of Women since 2000. And the Episcopal Church Center in New York City has become a gathering place during the Commission meetings for women and men across the Anglican Communion for hospitality, fellowship, worship, events, and advocacy. Last week, over 100 participants visited the Church Center from 23 countries. Twenty accredited Anglican Communion delegates officially represented their provinces, attended UN Commission proceedings, and advocated for women in rural areas. Another 90 participants – young adults, indigenous women, members of Anglican Women’s Empowerment, and the Anglican Church of Canada – attended side and parallel events.

Delegates are charged with the hopes and dreams of all women and girls, and share their unique perspectives, experiences and stories through blogs and social media (http://episcoglobal.wordpress.com; http://www.facebook.com/episcopalglobalmision).

France Vixamar from the Diocese of Haiti, one of the Episcopal Church’s two official representatives at this year’s Commission, commented: “I have been blessed; I’m a survivor from the earthquake. When Bishop Duracin ask me to go to the UNCSW, I said this is my time to help other women. I come with a desire to connect with other women of faith and re-vision of a new Haiti.”

Robin Denney, the Episcopal Church’s other official representative, dreams beyond gender: “My hope is that we as Episcopalians/Anglicans from around the world, in coming together to advocate for the empowerment of rural women, can live into the unity of Christ, for ‘there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus’” (Galatians 3:28b).