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The Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia

Anglican Women's Studies Centre

Reporting back from the GATA Gathering

By Revd Irene Ayallo

Revd Irene Ayallo and Ala Toetu'u-Tamihere, both PhD St John's College students were invited to participate in the inaugural gathering of the Global Anglican Theological Academy recently at the International Studies Centre, Canterbury Cathedral, UK with the help from the Mentoring Programme of the Anglican Women's Studies Centre which contributed to their travelling expenses. The Anglican Communion GATA project was established to make a difference by advocating for and enabling women's leadership in the Anglican Communion for young women scholars from 'minority' communities. More background information on GATA is available in the December 2011 Newsletter edition.

It was simply amazing to be part of a project which seeks to increase the contributions of minority women from across the globe in scholarship, in theological educational leadership and in representative roles, where issues facing the Anglican Communion are being officially addressed. I cannot recount in this little piece the many things I learnt from the April 2012 GATA meeting.



Beginning each day with prayers and bible study reminded us that women's ministry is very much a part of God's ministry. This knowledge inspired me (and us) to *reflect on our past and present role in women's ministry* within the Anglican Communion. Sadly, for the majority of us the past was filled with difficulties and challenges. But biblical women characters such as Queen Vashti and Abigail reminded us that we could either choose to focus on our difficulties or 'stand up and do something about it'. It was encouraging for me to know that there were (and are) women who have made it through similar (and even worse) difficulties and who were willing to share their knowledge and experiences, for the sake of building up the kingdom of God. In

this respect, I deeply valued and appreciated the presence and contributions of Dr Jenny Te Paa, Prof Esther Mombo, and Prof Kwok Pui Lan – and other 'fore-mothers/fathers' who have been part of our ministry journeys. Meeting and sharing in conversations with the Archbishop of Canterbury was indeed a blessing, given that has been a great supporter of women's ministry.

Through this meeting, I realised that women have be very strategic to make a meaningful contribution to discourses within the communion. The first of these strategies is critically evaluating areas that we (as women) are missing and lacking. During our time in Canterbury I

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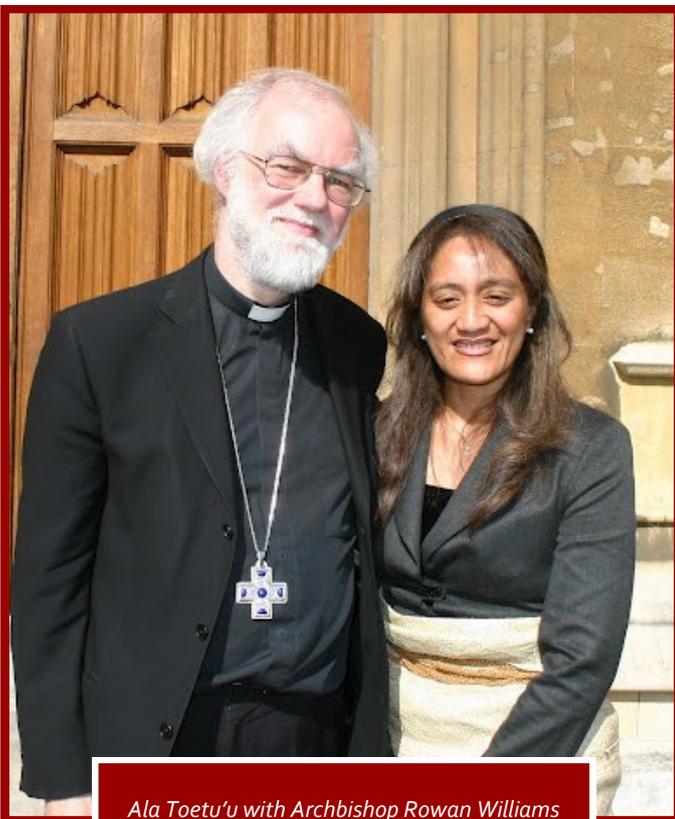
became more aware of the missing voices of minority women in intellectual discourses with the communion. For me, this was a challenge and encouragement to write and publish whenever possible, as a way of increasing the voices of minority women in discourses within the communion. I realised that it is 'easier' to write and publish within a community of intellectual discourse where writers can give each other construc-

tive feedback and comments. GATA gave us the opportunity to begin to create and generate such communities among ourselves, and to enable and empower other women to join.

Thank you Women Studies Centre for contributing to my trip and experiences in the UK.

A Reflection of GATA, London 2012

By Ala Toetu'u-Tamihere



Ala Toetu'u with Archbishop Rowan Williams

and women who are currently active in the life and mission of the Anglican Church in various ways. Dr Jenny Plane Te Paa, founding member of GATA (Global Anglican Theology Academy) introduced GATA as 'A Project to Make a Difference by Advocating for and Enabling Women's Leadership in the Anglican Communion' (*WSC Newsletter*, 1:11, 2012, p. 4-6). This was the focus of the GATA, London 2012 meeting at the International Studies Centre at Canterbury Cathedral from the 26th-31st of March. The following is a reflection of my experience of GATA, 2012—an experience of Anglican leadership in London and talks to envision ways to mentor young Anglican women leaders in theology and academia at the highest levels for life and mission in the Anglican Communion.

It was indeed an honour and a privilege to meet Archbishop Rowan Williams at Lambeth Palace, a strong advocate of women in the Anglican Communion worldwide, the GATA initiative included. It was particularly poignant and of great significance to meet with Archbishop Rowan Williams after media release of his pending retirement. What better way to achieve great mentoring and wise counsel about leadership at the highest level of Anglican Communion life than to hear the deeply insightful stories of his leadership, snapshots of issues encountered, his involvement with, and promotion of ecumenical engagement, especially on Muslim and Christian relations, and his personal thoughts on the same. Hearing his reflection of his time as Archbishop of Canterbury, one could not help but feel the presence of a great leader, who was indeed a serving leader—humble, gracious, hugely intelligent, visionary, compassionate, kind and a great sense of humour. I and my GATA sisters were in the presence of great leadership, no doubt. Here before us was a man with all the qualities a 'rookie' such as I would look to in terms of advocating for and mentoring future young women leaders in Aotearoa and Polynesia. Archbishop Rowan Williams was gracious enough to acknowledge some of the issues he grappled with but was very hopeful of the work and life of the church as he looks to retire. It was comforting and encouraging that even as he pondered retirement, he pledged his support, love and prayers to the advocacy and mentoring of young women leaders and the education of young women in the Church through the work and vision of GATA.

As I sit in my study on a clear, crispy April morning staring out of my window at the beautiful and serene landscape of St. John's College in Auckland, it is not hard to recall my experience of the convening of a small group of talented, successful, upcoming and established Anglican women, in a similar church setting—of great historical significance in the Anglican Church and of serene beauty and atmosphere half way across the world. These women comprised firstly of mentors: Dr Jenny Plane Te Paa, Professor Esther Mombo, Professor Kwok Pui-Lan, and Sue Parks as the Head of the Theological Education Desk for the Anglican Communion; and then as young women: Revd Dr Lalitha Jayatchitra (South India), Revd Mary Toreirei (Kenya), Ms Judy Berinai (Malaysia), Ms Indileni Hilukiluah (Namibia), Revd Vongai Mkronda (Zimbabwe) Revd Irene Ayallo (Kenya & New Zealand) and myself, 'Ala Tamihere (Tonga). These are women who are passionate about the theological education of women within our own contexts and beyond, women who are advocates of women leadership at all levels,

We were also very fortunate to meet with the senior staff of the Anglican Communion Office at St Andrew's House in London. It was as is often said, an up close and personal encounter with the senior staff as they shared about their portfolios and particularly how their work relates to the Anglican Communion. As upcoming women leaders in the Anglican Church, we gained deeper insight into the enormous mission and life of the global Church, and the issues the staff tirelessly works to resolve both across the Communion and ecumenically. I was both very impressed and hopeful with the work they were carrying out at Communion level, such expansive work by only a handful of staff members—a great lesson indeed in leadership through the administration of the life and mission of the Anglican Church worldwide. I did not have the chance to express my gratitude at the time for all the great work they do on behalf of the communion to have deep, meaningful dialogue with one another as Anglicans in the various existing networks, to create resources for more meaningful engagement with each other and with the Bible, amongst other valuable work they carry out. But in my heart, I was deeply grateful for this small group of senior staff who continue to work for and alongside us as we look for new ways of enabling and advocating for young women leaders throughout the Anglican Communion.

A rare treat awaited us as we arrived at Parliament House in London, our gracious host was Revd Rose Hudson Wilkin who is Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons and is

also a Chaplain to the Queen. My GATA sisters and I sat in a circle of women, nestled within the historical and ancient Chapel of the House of Commons, closed to the public but opened specially for the GATA group. Revd Rose shared her inspiring story of her journey to becoming Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons—a leadership role that she as woman now serves alongside her other responsibilities as parish priest in the outskirts of London, devoted wife and loving mother. We were able to walk through the hallways of the Parliament House while it was still in session and to be present at the place of significant political dialogue in London was indeed an additional bonus during our journey.

Back at the International Studies Centre at Canterbury Cathedral for the rest of that week, we reflected on the various lead-

ership positions and work of those leaders we had the privilege to meet and witness for ourselves as young women. Every day we gathered for contextual Bible study and also had the privilege to attend the services offered at Canterbury Cathedral. I enjoyed immensely the wonderful evensong services at the Cathedral. I was reminded again of how wonderful it was to be Anglican in this day and age, because where ever I would go in the Communion, the liturgy would make me feel deeply and spiritually, a piece of home away from home.

Additionally significant during GATA 2012 was the chance to hear from our mentors and founding members of GATA—Dr Jenny Plane Te Paa, Professor Esther Mombo, and Professor Kwok Pui-Lan. Dr Te Paa has taught for 20 years at St John's College and has held and is currently holding leadership roles at the international level in the Anglican Communion for the last decade and a half. Dr Jenny Plane Te Paa in her session, presented a historical look at the plight women have faced yet

continue to face in terms of leadership within the church at the local level yet was representative also of what is happening at the international level. Dr Te Paa emphasised the need for us women to understand our plight, and called for a collective strategic effort by all of us to be creative and imaginative in identifying ways to advocate and mentor young women leaders in the present church context and climate. Kwok Pui-Lan, well known post-colonial academic and professor spoke a little about an on-going project on Anglican Women in the Communion and presented a paper on a post-colonial view of the

Anglican Communion. In the words of Professor Mombo summarising Pui Lan's presentation, 'Pui-Lan put into context the Anglican Communion in which we are players, and what is at stake. But one of the things she did in terms of statistics and in these days of statistics is to point out that the greatest increase in numbers of Anglicans are not in England but are in Asia and Africa, and there is a shift, and others such as Jenkins have observed, there is a big shift in centre of Christianity, and has for a number of years now. Numbers in Uganda are more than in Canterbury, our mother church.' It is important that as we call for and collectively come together as mentors and advocates of women leaders at all levels to know our current demography of Anglicans throughout the Communion and to let those statistics inform the important work at hand.

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Wednesday, 27th June—Friday, 29th June 2012

St John's Theological College, Auckland

ALLOWANCES are available to assist those who require help with Accommodation and/or Travel costs. Please register early—non-stipendiary women will be given first preference.

FOR ALL HUI ENQUIRIES & REGISTRATION PLEASE CONTACT

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Professor Mombo in her presentation to us eager, learning young women noted that the statistics Professor Pui-Lan mentioned in her presentation is one side of the coin within the context where she works as a theologian. Other issues she brought to our notice were the issues of injustice which covers a whole lot of aspects of which gender is significant. Professor Mombo noted that it is often the case that the first that you see in newspaper headlines are the cases of misery, the num-



At St Andrews House, the offices of the Anglican Communion, London

bers of such cases are increasing and it is within this context that we work. We are called, Professor Mombo notes, all of us to work within this particular context to mentor and advocate for women leadership and education. Dr Mombo also brought to mind that there is a need to re-look at how we read and interpret the Bible as text: 'There is a danger when most of the Anglicans will claim they are reading the Bible better than others and that the Bible is clear! This calls for us to continue reading the Bible, critiquing the way we read the Bible because it is a text that can be used against women rather than to give life to women as it was intended.' Professor Mombo cautions against authoritative readings of the Bible that continue to denigrate women such as the way Ephesians is read at weddings.

Professor Mombo's call is for a re-interpretation, re-reading, re-viewing of the Bible from an essentially social justice perspective. Secondly, Professor Mombo urged us all to re-consider our cultures, to objectively critique our cultures because 'culture is a two edged sword'—'Our cultures can affirm or deny life especially where women are concerned. Therefore, there is a need for us all look at it critically and say what is it in culture that affirms life and what is it that denies life. And lastly, there is concern that we should bring the issue of violence to the table at all levels, from our local church dialogues at parish level to Lambeth level, especially violence against women.' Dr Mombo stressed the importance to 'make violence a Lambeth issue not just a local issue.' Noting that 'it is important that we bring to the discussion issues of violence wherever we are, to teaching positions, pastoral positions, writing positions, to ensure that that issue is brought to the discussion.' Professor Mombo's call in my view is a call to be awareness, to acknowledge such issues persist in our live at local and Communion levels. To acknowledge that violence is present is the first step to dealing with such a perpetual issue which affects all our lives especially women.

The above are just some of my thoughts upon reflecting on the significant areas covered in the presentations by our GATA mentors. These are voices of wise and theologically sound perspectives that we as young GATA women must not and cannot neglect. These are voices from the margins that we as members of our local Anglican churches and beyond that the Anglican Communion, simply cannot afford to ignore if we are to truly implement socially just and transformative changes within the places we work and live, and in answer to our calling to mentor and advocate for women education and leadership at all levels of Anglican life and mission.

Each member of the GATA, London 2012, was allowed space to present a paper on our current academic work or on a significantly relevant work to the purpose of our meeting, which may already have been published. A wide range of topics were covered such as: Revd Tororeiy's '*Decolonizing Marital Gender Norms in Ephesians 5:21-33*', Revd Ayallo's '*Enabling the courage to be and the courage to hope in and through mission*': *The Fourth Marks of Mission* and my own

PhD work on '*Talanoa mei he Kaliloa: successful stories of Tongan Graduates in Aotearoa and Tonga*', in efforts to include Tongan voice in research on pathways to success in education for the primary purpose of advocating for and mentoring young people, Tongan and minorities in education. These are just a few of the many topics covered by us young women. It was an awesome opportunity to get a taste of what other upcoming, successful young women are passionately engaging in academically, across the Communion, especially from minority contexts. It was also an honour and a privilege to make these presentations to our mentors, Dr Te Paa, Professor Esther Mombo and Professor Pui-Lan. Valuable feedback was given from our mentors and our fellow GATA sisters. This project of sharing our academic and theological work will be a significant part of our on-going mentoring programme for women in leadership, in theological education, in education at the highest levels and the life of women in the Anglican Communion.

We were also very fortunate to have Joanna Moriarty, the SPCK Senior Editor speak about strategies for publishing. This was very useful indeed because in order to advocate for women theological education and mentor young women leaders, it is vital that we research and publish works for and by women in response to our GATA initiative, and in all our calling to be socially just as lay and ordained people.

GATA 2012 was an amazing and empowering first-hand experience of leadership in the work and administration of the Anglican Communion at an international level, an opportunity to reflect on women's dismal involvement at leadership levels in Anglican life and mission, a wonderful chance to share our current doctoral research and an opportune time to identify ways to advocate and mentor young women leaders in the Anglican Church at the provincial and communion levels in view of the many gifts women can offer the life and mission of the church, and the communities in which we work and live. We were re-

minded again that as women we must search for strategically imaginative and creatively constructive new ways in which we can continue to mentor and advocate women leadership, theological and academic education to the highest levels. We decided therefore to implement forums both on the worldwide web and across other channels, such as media, for the moment a Facebook page, a blog where we can post issues, share resources, Bible Studies and other things to mentor and advocate women leadership in all aspects and at all levels of Church life. We also have in the work for this year, a contribution by all women at the GATA, London 2012 meet to write a piece towards the formation of an Anglican Communion resource booklet against violence committed against women. This was in response to one of the senior staff's call from the Anglican Communion for such a resource.

As we ended our week-long meeting for GATA, London 2012, we were reminded in Dr Jenny Plane Te Paa's words of our calling 'to have compassion and grace, in all the things we do, may we be God's instru-

ments of grace and peace, take ideas and dreams, shape and craft not so much for ourselves but for our little sisters in the Communion' especially for those on the margins. This is our GATA prayer, our GATA calling, our GATA work—that by the grace and compassion of Christ, our Lord, we collectively come together, men and women, laity and clergy, in thought, mind, words and action, and in the different ways we can to advocate for and mentor young women leaders in our church locales and throughout our worldwide family, the Anglican Communion.

Through GATA, London 2012, I have forged bonds of sisterhood and friendship that I know in my heart will last a lifetime. Women who are successful and compassionate, women who exist in marginal spaces yet act and work towards changing such circumstances in the life and mission of the church. I give thanks to God for each of these women, a precious gift to the world and each other in our calling as either lay or ordained to mentor and advocate for women leadership in Anglican life. I treasure each and every one of my GATA sisters and our mentors, Dr Jenny, Professor Esther and Professor Pui-Lan. Thank you for your stories. Thank you for sharing your struggles and your accomplishments. I will treasure those stories for life. I am that much more blessed to have met you all. I continue to hold you all in prayer and thought as you carry on our work at hand. God bless you and keep you till we meet again.

As I sit here in my study at the College of St John's the Evangelist, in Tamaki Makau Rau, that meeting of GATA, London 2012 remains vividly imprinted in my mind, my *Wordsworthian Daffodil*, my continual hope that despite the dismal representative of women in the leadership roles within the contexts we call home, the dismal representative of women in theological education at the highest levels, we will one day make significant changes in these areas in and for the life and mission of the church. I dream and I take one step at a time towards ful-

filling the GATA objective in all areas I am involved in. I dream too, that we all take our own initiatives to care for, to pause and take note of a very significant yet sometimes ignored counterpart of our Anglican church—women. Thanks be to God for all women. For the love and care that they give and continue to give to one and all, we give thanks to God.



Let me lastly express my deepest gratitude to the organizing committee, the international funding agencies, the leaders of our Church at the Communion level and in London who through their willingness and commitment to the GATA initiative, time and financial support have enabled the successful gathering of GATA, London 2012. Thank you to the leaders who willingly shared your stories and experiences of leadership in the Church and the communities with which you work alongside. We are indeed indebted to you also for your continuing support of the GATA initiative. It is important that such an initiative be put in motion to mentor and advocate for the theological, and academic education of young women and women leadership to the highest level within the Anglican Communion. My utmost thanks to Dr Jenny Te Paa, Professor Esther Mombo, Professor Pui-Lan and Sue Parks. Mālō e 'ofa, mālō e lotu pea mālō e taki lelei. 'Ofa lahi atu kia moutolu.

Here at home I first acknowledge with deep gratitude the generous funding support provided by the General Synod Women's Studies Centre. I also acknowledge and give thanks to my own College, St John's, my own Dean Revd Dr Frank Smith, Revd Dr Helen-Ann Hartley, Dr Te Paa, our Commissioner, Gail Thompson, Lois Anderson, all staff and students for your all your help, love, support and prayers leading up to the trip, and to my safe return to this our beloved College. The updates of events, especially during the loss of our beloved matua, Venerable Dr Hone Kaa here at home made me feel I was just a 'mouse click' away. Thank you so much to Dr Jenny for making sure I safely arrived at every point of the journey to and from London. For the sense of love and community we have here at St John's and amongst my GATA sisters, mentors and I, we give thanks to God. Mālō e 'ofa. Mālō e lotu. Many, many blessings to one and all.

The Centre for Anglican Women's Studies

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The Centre for Anglican Women's Studies, commonly known as 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.

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 IN MINISTRY
PROVINCIAL HUI
27th–29th JUNE 2012**



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