

SAINT JOAN'S INTERNATIONAL
ALLIANCE

FOUNDED 1911

AND STILL WORKING FOR WOMEN'S EQUALITY IN
CHURCH, STATE, AND SOCIETY

NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION WITH SPECIAL
CONSULTATIVE STATUS AT THE UNITED NATIONS

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SAINT JOAN'S INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE



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Minutes of the General Assembly, 2014, and

Annual Report to Belgian Tribunale de Commerce, Liege, Belgium

Dear Members and Friends of the Alliance,

The annual General Assembly of the Alliance, in accordance with the constitution, was held on March 12th, 2014, in New York City, during the annual conference of the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations. Those present were new members Mary Sue Barnett and Denise Davis from Kentucky, Dorothy Irvin (Minnesota), Gabriella Velardi Ward (New York City), and several friends of the Alliance.

The meeting opened with a **moment of silence** for the deceased members of the Alliance—a brief personal remembrance of the women and men who worked in the Alliance for the progress of women in Church and society, over the last century.

Minutes of our last meeting on March 6, 2013, in New York. We held elections as required every two years. Twelve votes were cast, six by members present and six by absent members who voted by giving their proxy to members present. Those elected to office were:

President: Ida Raming

Vice-president: Joel Papa

Secretary: Dorothy Irvin

Treasurers: Sharon Masloski and Connie Aligada (for local North American treasury at Bremer Bank in Saint Paul, Minnesota)

UN Representatives: Gabriella Velardi Ward and Dorothy Irvin

Webkeeper: Joel Papa

Treasurer's Report

There is no international bank account in Euros at present. Formerly there was an international (Euros) account in Belgium, to which groups in different countries sent an annual contribution to facilitate international communication, but that account was closed and made over to a local Belgian account in 2005, at the time when a revision of the constitution was required by the Belgian policies for international non-profit organizations.

Our North American account at Bremer Bank in Saint Paul, Minnesota, receives dues from US members and from Canadian members who pay their dues in US dollars. At the

moment we have no practical way of receiving payment in other currencies, but friends in other countries can become official members by sending

a postal money order in US dollars, which they can purchase in their local currency. The money order should be made out to Saint Joan's International Alliance and mailed to the address above, 1360 University Avenue, etc. We welcome friends and collaborators who are not members, but official membership is required in order to vote at meetings or to apply for a grounds pass into United Nations buildings, as is customary during the annual UN conference of the Commission on the Status of Women.

The current balance in our Bremer Bank account is \$193.00. This account is used to pay the expenses of giving a presentation at the UN, as many NGO's do. We pay rent for the space and for the listing in the on-line/printed/TV wall monitor schedule for the events, about \$200 each year, or \$400 with a projector, plus the cost of printed brochures about the work of the Alliance.

We thank those members who paid the annual dues before or after May 30th, 2014, and hope that others will send a check for \$13 very shortly.

Old Business: We reviewed our activity as a non-government organization at the United Nations. At the

General Assembly in New York in 2009 we solicited interest in our new caucus "Religions (starting with our own) and Violence Against Women." Thereafter we gave presentations for four years in a row (2010-2013) at the annual meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, with speakers from our own group as well as outside speakers collaborating with us. Our presentations pointed out different aspects of our conviction that many of the problems which occupy the attention of the UN—abusive and lethal domestic behavior, inadequate income for the women who form the majority of the world's poor, inability to give all children the food and nurture they all need, rape as a weapon of war, the spread of AIDS, and many others--are caused or exacerbated by the teachings and actions of the world's religions, starting with our own traditionally Catholic background.

New Business: This year we gave no presentation; there was plenty to do just in attending the presentations of many NGO groups. We were also able to attend some UN sessions across the street in the UN building, something that was interrupted for several years during renovation of the UN premises.

A current issue for us is the question of polling the members about their views on current world issues, so that we are prepared to offer our (at least verbal) support, immediately, to women in danger of suppression or physical harm. Usually this takes the form of composing and sending a statement, or of signing on to a statement or petition composed by another group. However, most of us are painfully aware that the church of our childhood is often the institution that we need to criticize. We are a voice that the church and the UN need to hear. Although we cannot speak within the church administration and policy-making groups, we are welcomed to write statements and speak out at a meeting in a UN auditorium. We have experienced great agreement when we make our voice heard there.

So it is worth our while to determine what opinions we share. All were in favor of this step, and we now call upon one or more members to volunteer to follow up on verifying what we agree on, and arranging a procedure for quick notification and consultation when issues arise. We want to make our voices heard in both the church and for countries where women are suppressed. Who can volunteer to spend some hours working on this? Please phone or e-mail me.

A big step forward for the Alliance in the CSW 2014 was a better connection with those NGO representatives who are working to prepare for next year, the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Conference on Women in 1995 and a review of the goals it hoped to reach twenty years later. The Holy See has also been reviewing those goals and a big task for the women from many NGO's was to read and evaluate its comments, particularly since they move a step backward in women's hopes for development. Late into the last nights of the CSW conference, meetings in the UN auditoriums were hearing from women all over the world. It was important to hear that many women in the Christian and Catholic traditions do not agree with everything that their church leaders are saying. We hope the UN hears and understands the concerns of women in the world's religions. We need to make use of our connection with the UN and speak out.

We took up the question of whether we wanted to apply for membership in Women's Ordination Worldwide, founded in 1996 as an international coalition of organizations. Some of us remembered the WOW international conference in Dublin in 2001, and the one in Ottawa in 2005. The next one has been announced for Philadelphia in September, 2015. WOW was a strong supporter of Father Roy Bourgeois, with a number of its member groups, including WOC (Women's Ordination Conference) in the US, and Call to Action (US and Canada), accompanying him when he went to Rome to present to the Vatican the signatures supporting him. We agreed unanimously to apply for membership in WOW.

Later: This was done at the time of the WOW board meeting in Dublin in September, 2014, and we soon after received notice that WOW had voted unanimously to accept the Alliance on its board. For more information on what WOW does and on the conference in September, 2015 in Philadelphia, see the website of Women's Ordination Worldwide. Register to attend, if you can.

We noted that many building projects at the UN have been completed, now allowing five grounds passes per NGO to access the UN buildings. Those who plan to attend in March, 2015, and would like a grounds pass to attend events inside the UN should send their names to Dorothy before December 12, 2014.

As we ended the meeting, we set the time and place of our next General Assembly for New York concurrent with the Commission on the Status of Women conference in March, 2015. We concluded with a Eucharistic liturgy led by Gabriella and celebrated by everyone present.

Respectfully submitted,

Dorothy Irvin, Secretary

Born in Arc, France in 1412, Joan of Arc at the age of 17, obeying voices and visions from God and the saints, led the French army to repel the English troops occupying France, and to seat the French king on his throne. But the English, angry at being defeated in battle by a girl, maneuvered to have her declared a witch and a heretic by the Church, and she was burned alive in the public square in Rouen on May 30th, 1431. The false accusations were corrected 25 years later. She was declared a saint by the church in 1920. She is recognized as having played a determining role in forming the modern concept of national sovereignty, an important concept in the work of the U.N. today. Her feast day is May 30th.