

## And finally . . . a few reflections . . .

As I was thinking about assembling our circle hopes and information, I went looking for some circle clip art. Much of what was available for free was a variety of Celtic circles. But as I looked through hundreds of images, I started thinking of the circles we look at every day. . .

Sun, moon, planets, especially our own that we call the Big Blue Marble. How beautiful it is from space. How beautiful it is in our reality. And yet in our quiet moments, we often listen to it groan. How will we make a difference as we consider the earth God has given us? I love the words from Eucharistic Prayer C: “At your command all things came to be: the vast expanse of interstellar space, galaxies, suns, the planets in their courses, and this fragile earth, our island home.”

With whom do we live on this island? As women who are mothers and friends, aunts, grandmothers, nieces and sisters, we are linked all the way around this wide earth in the joy and hope of the God who loves all of creation.

I found pictures of round loaves of bread, reminding me of the Eucharistic feast in which we share. Just as we break bread together at the altar, from Japan to Louisiana, and from Capetown to Beijing; from Port-au-Prince to Juneau and even just from New York to Springfield, we break bread together in daily life. Are there others who long to break bread with us?

I found water droplets and bowls of water in baptismal fonts, and I thought of that lovely baptismal liturgy, “We thank you, Lord, for the gift of water. . .” Will our circle reach out to circles of others who long for just one droplet?

And finally, I looked for things about Beijing. It is a paradox, all of this. Beijing represents so many different things throughout so many different eras of history. In a place, where in recent history, we question the condition of human rights, the Beijing Platform for Action was written. In a booming culture and economy, what issues face the circles of women in China?

As women, we know we cannot escape connection. For many of us everything is connected to everything else. For most of us, those connections have to do with the solidarity of the heart, solidarity in survival. Thank you, God for creating us as women.

For those of you are still wondering about how a circle might work, I suspect there’s no way to find out but to try it. I hope that if you do, you’ll share what Rachel Lyle has experienced. Rachel was one of the seminarian interns in the Office for Women’s Ministries this year. She started a Beijing Circle at Yale Divinity School. This is what Rachel writes. . .

*A Beijing Circle is...*

*...a powerful transformer of the women in it*

*...a support group; if you want to change something in your life or in yourself, it's a home base from which to go out and try*

*...an island of free speech and laughter*

*...an occasion in which its member are witnesses to each others' lives. They are role models and soul connections for each other.*

*...a mutual aid and learning societies*

*...an agent of change*

*...a sacred space*

*...a place where we get strength from God to act with grace toward others*

*...a place where we get strength from God to act with accountability*

*...a place where we can get support to become Christ-like, as we want to be*

**May you be blessed in your circle work**