



waterwheel

A Quarterly Newsletter of the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual

Editorial

Religion is endlessly interesting because it seems to be as much a barometer as a thermometer of culture. It reflects the subtle changes that can precipitate new ways of looking at things just as surely as it measures the ups and downs of daily life. Feminist approaches to religion work this way, or so we are always learning at WATER.

A forthcoming study of clergy women in many mainline mostly white Christian denominations shows an enduring 9% salary gap with men, inadequate criteria for measuring women's job performance as women, and a trend away from the parish-based ministry of old. All this in a culture which is increasingly pluralistic bodes well for women who are preparing for diverse ministry challenges, badly for those who cling to traditional expectations.

The World Council of Churches is gearing up for its next General Assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe, next year, with lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered issues widely viewed as the locus for ideological differences and cultural diversity. WCC might take a page from the Religious Consultation on Population, Reproductive Health and Ethics' exciting project, "Good Sex: Women's Religious Wisdom on Sexuality," in which scholars from a range of religious traditions are exploring what women have to say. It is a good bet that foregrounding such wisdom in the debates would result in a new approach for everyone.

Re-imagining colleagues are firing up a revival for their next gathering. Ex-communicated Catholic theologian Tissa Balasuriya seems to have drawn fire for asking whether Christianity Vatican-style can be exported to the new religious "market" that is Asia. Islamic women are pushing the envelope when it comes to both interpretation of the Koran and traditional practices.

All of these colleagues know something about the price of integrity, a price we at WATER strive to make more affordable for all.

Of An Index

by Mary E. Hunt

Publishing an index every five years is more than a convenience for readers, though, hopefully, it is that as well. It presents an opportunity for us at WATER to reflect on the work we do, assess our strengths and weaknesses, and make plans to improve our offerings.

We do so this time with deep gratitude to Susan O'Brien, one-time WATER intern now Acquisitions Librarian at the New York Society Library in New York City. Her technical skill in compiling this handy guide and her generous donation of same to WATER is a signal gift. Likewise, our Managing Crone Carol Scinto deserves kudos for keeping us on deadline.

Five years ago in this space I rehearsed the history of this publication. At first WATER managed without a regular publication. Then we started **WATERwheel** in 1988 as a way to convey a bit of what we're thinking and doing, what comes our way, where we believe the wind in feminist faith-based social change ought to blow.

We are faced every three months not with blank screens but an abundance of material from which we cull our contents. We decide on lead article

and liturgy themes based on the urgencies of the moment and the issues we think need attention. From your responses - requests to reprint and comments that come our way - it seems we have touched nerves. Beauty and Beijing, children and cyberspace, pluralism and prayer are just some of my topics. Diann Neu has developed liturgies for first menstruation and menopause, for naming and croning, for doing justice and celebrating the sabbath, among others. Some readers will accuse us of advanced eclecticism. We like to think of it as variety spicing life. Your suggestions are always welcome.

The Resource Center grows apace with literally thousands of titles coming our way for review. We select carefully the ones that make it into our Resources section, ever attentive to the changing needs of our readers who trust our judgment. We hope to have the whole collection computerized in the near future, thereby adding another dimension to our offerings.

A review of programs and projects in these five years reveals that we are increasingly global in our scope. Latin American exchange has gone on from the beginning, and it continues. But this Index makes clear that Europe, Australia and New Zealand also are places where we work with kindred colleagues. Our challenge ahead is to learn from Africa and the East, to break through the hegemonic Christian-shaped, English-speaking barrier to a more global approach. Again, your help is needed.

E-mail has emerged in these five years as a friendly rival of sorts to **WATERwheel**. We love it for its speed and scope; we are wary of it for its elusiveness and elitism. More people have physical mailboxes than electronic ones still. We don't cover anything in depth on e-mail so this publication is still our prime vehicle. Nonetheless, our Index in 2002 will probably have to include topics treated netwise. Let us know your thinking on technology.

All this leads to the obvious. Your readership is literally what makes this newsletter. We need your continued financial support, indeed dona-

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tions over and above subscription costs so we can do the scale of outreach necessary to find people who want to be a part of the Alliance. We also need your feedback, your responses to articles and reports, your reactions to liturgies as well as your adaptations of them in your own settings. We need your sense of what kinds of books you want us to review. We also need your suggestions of places where we can distribute this publication so it will find its way into the hands of people with like concerns.

As we move toward the celebration of fifteen years of WATER's presence on the feminist religious scene, we do so with gratitude and with hope. It is with gratitude to you and all who make WATER work. It is with hope that when the twentieth anniversary Index is published it will reflect an ever more diverse and committed Alliance, including you.

Mary E. Hunt, PhD, is co-founder and co-director of WATER.

Another Five Years of WATERwheel: An Index Vols. 6-10, Nos. 1-4, 1993-1997

Compiled by Susan O'Brien

This Index covers WATERwheel from Vol. 6, No. 1 (Spring 1993) to this issue, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Winter 1997). All volumes have four issues.

Headings and subheadings are in **bold type** with modifiers or scope notes where necessary. See references guide you from a term not used as a heading to one which is used. See also references suggest related headings where additional material of interest may be found.

Because of the pervasiveness of Justice, Patriarchy and Lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered issues and aspects of Feminist Spirituality in WATER's work, as well as the omnipresence of Co-founders and Co-directors Hunt & Neu - these subjects and individuals have not been included as subject headings. However, as each Newsletter is centered around a Lead Article by Mary E. Hunt and a Liturgy by Diann L. Neu, a list of **Lead Articles** and **Liturgies** has been included in the index.

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We Are a Wheel

by Diann L. Neu

Preparation

Place this **WATERwheel** in front of you as a symbol of the five years it represents, and/or gather your back issues and open them to your favorite pieces. Invite others to join you.

Centering Prayer

 by Hildegard of Bingen

A wheel was shone to me,
wonderful to behold...

Divinity is in its omniscience and
omnipotence
like a wheel,
a circle,
a whole,
that can neither be understood,
nor divided,
nor begun,
nor ended.

Round:

 "We are a Wheel," words of Hildegard of Bingen, round by Betty Wendelborn

We are a wheel, a circle of life.
We are a wheel, a circle of power.
We are a wheel, a circle of light.
Circling the world this sacred hour.

Connecting with You

We dedicate this blessing to you. Imagine the many ways you connect to others who read **WATERwheel**. Take a few minutes to recall what you value about it: lead articles, liturgies, In Memory of Her memorials, stories about WATER, resources, news and notes... (Pause) Imagine yourself joined with other readers, doing works of justice.

Blessing

May you be blessed with faithfulness, long life and sharp memories.

Connecting Our Community

Let us offer this blessing in praise of our international community of **WATERwheel** readers. We live in 46 nations and 50 US states plus DC! Think of the ways you connect globally each time you read the 'Wheel. (Pause)

Blessing

May our community be blessed with new life, diversity and healing powers.

Connecting Our Work

Let us enjoy this blessing remembering our common work. **WATERwheel** exists to make visible feminist theology, ethics and ritual. Pause and ponder how the 'Wheel empowers you to make visible feminist issues. (Pause)

How can you connect friends, family, colleagues with WATER? Think of someone you can introduce to WATER today. (Pause) Share your **WATERwheel**, or give someone a subscription.

Blessing

May our work be blessed with creativity, re-sources and justice making.

Closing Prayer

Hildegard of Bingen 900 years ago said: Now here is the image of the power of God; This firmament is an all-encompassing circle. No one can say where this wheel begins or ends.

Diann L. Neu, MDiv, STM, MSW, is co-founder and co-director of WATER.



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Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual
8035 13th Street, Silver Spring, MD 20910-4803 USA

Forwarding and Address Correction Requested

Editors: Mary E. Hunt and Diann L. Neu

Designer: Diann L. Neu

Editorial Assistant: Carol Murdock Scinto

Circulation: Cynthia Lapp

ISSN 0898-6606

Phone: (301) 589-2509; *FAX:* (301) 589-3150

E-mail: water@hers.com; *Internet:* http://www.hers.com/water

WATERwheel is published quarterly by the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual. Annual subscription, \$35. Address inquiries to the WATER office. Additional copies of this issue can be ordered for \$5 each. **Complimentary copies are available on request for conferences, seminars, classes or discussion groups.** Include street address and daytime telephone number of the person ordering materials. We will be happy to arrange for audio transcription of **WATERwheel** at a cost of \$10 per tape.

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