



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

## Editorial

Fifteen years of WATER is a sobering if incredible thought. As the accompanying article reveals, ours is an unlikely history, a tale of necessity rather than ideology. When we started WATER we had little idea of what we were doing, even less resources to do it. But in the intervening years you and thousands of others around the world have responded resoundingly to the initial impulses of a small group of committed women.

One way to think about WATER's history is to imagine the feminist religious scene without it. Surely the sun would come up each day, people would go about their business. Such a signal impact we have not made. But we like to think that many—perhaps you and those with whom you live and work—have been enriched because of our programs, projects and publications.

Perhaps you have read this publication for years for new ideas, relied on our Resource Center for your research. Perhaps you were inspired by WATER to start a spirituality group, plan a liturgy. You may have been involved in the Shared Garden or a WATER class. Whatever your participation, it is part of what makes the Alliance work.

Another way to think about fifteen years is to judge WATER by the company it keeps. We are grateful to the larger social justice community that brings critical religious principles to the political debate. We get a great deal from the Women-Church Convergence, a network of feminist social change agents from around the country who try to be church and do justice against the odds. We rely on women's groups throughout the world—sisters in Germany, Chile, Brazil, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, to name a few—to keep us clear and connected. You make this work enjoyable in many languages and cuisines.

Fifteen years from now we may be able to say more clearly what it has meant to be WATER. But now we can say with crystal clarity, thank you.

## Fifteen Years of WATER

By Mary E. Hunt

Historian Jill Kerr Conway insists we women must tell our own stories in a forthright and thorough way if the truth is to endure beyond us. On the occasion of WATER's fifteenth anniversary, I offer one view of our history which I hope will do just that.

In the fall of 1982, Diann Neu was working on women's issues at the Center of Concern in Washington DC and I had just returned from a two-year internship teaching in Argentina. I was looking for a job when friends in the area, including women connected with NETWORK, a Catholic social justice lobby, suggested that what was needed was a place of our own to do feminist theology. This struck a chord in me.

As a Catholic feminist liberation theologian, pro-choice and lesbian, I was not in much danger of employment in a church-related institution, so the thought of creating something new was attractive. More to the point, the stated need fit my skills, so I wrote a two-page proposal. I began to talk about a "Women's Theological Alliance" to

laughed at my joke, and it has been WATER ever since.

So WATER started at our house, one of us at the dining room table, the other in the study, making phone calls, writing letters, trying out ideas, raising money. Within a month, Holy Week of 1983, we moved into the modest office that has expanded twice since then to house WATER of today. The instigating band of women, champagne bottle in hand, blessed the initial space and we were in business.

Early WATER programs included brown bag lunches in downtown DC where churchwomen would gather. They included weekend "Connecting Conversations" and classes. Liturgies and rituals were popular from the beginning, giving women and men a chance to pray and explore spirituality in new modes. Speakers from around the world have held forth at WATER. Seders have brought hundreds of people together for prayer and festivity. Women ministers have come for breakfast; groups have worked through issues over tea.

### *"What if we add ethics and ritual and call it WATER?"*

Protestant women church bureaucrats, Catholic nuns, anyone who would listen. Some knew better than I what I meant; many were helpful beyond thanks.

Diann and I invited an ecumenical group of a dozen or so women to our house to discuss the idea. By the end of the evening they persuaded us that we should both take up the work and see if we could get it off the ground. It is still not clear how they thought we would eat and pay our bills, but with their encouragement, we went ahead. Shortly thereafter, I woke up one morning and said to Diann, "What if we add ethics and ritual and call it WATER?" We

My Latin American experience was the foundation for our ongoing "Women Crossing Worlds" work there. The current round of "Shared Garden" workshops with women from both Americas and indeed around the world are further expressions of the many workshops, lectures, liturgies and exchange visits to women's groups in the Southern Cone which have been part of our work from the beginning.

What began as my address book is now a mailing list of thousands. What began as Diann's and my seminary libraries is now a 5000+ volume resource center. What began

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WATER is a feminist educational center, a network of justice-seeking people that began in 1983 in response to the need for serious theological, ethical and liturgical development for and by women. We work locally, nationally and internationally doing programs, projects, publications, workshops, retreats, counseling and liturgical planning which have helped thousands of people to be part of an inclusive church and society.

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For anyone who would like to receive **WATERwheel** on tape, audio transcription of the desired issue(s) can be arranged. Contact WATER, 301-589-2509. Cassettes will be made by Volunteers for the Visually Handicapped at \$10 per tape.

## Fifteen Years...

*(Continued from page 1)*

as a good if amorphous idea is now a lively and sought out source of information, connections and strategies, all of it aimed at fostering religiously based social change from a feminist perspective.

The people who "are" WATER embody its history. Many of you will recognize yourselves: staff such as Cindy Lapp who keep the whole thing moving; volunteers who come and go (some stay, says our editor Carol Murdock Scinto, a volunteer of such dedication and duration that the Resource Center, ready to be computerized when we can get a grant, will carry her name!); interns who train and take their WATER skills with them; Visiting Scholars who do their research here and enrich the whole field; guests both national and international who link us with the larger world; local colleagues who come to programs and join us in coalitions; Women-Church Convergence groups with whom WATER collaborates; people who come for counseling and spiritual direction; children who give the office a warmth that surpasses even the taste of afternoon tea, a WATER tradition we cherish.

People ask us what we "do," since WATER's broad agenda is more difficult to conceptualize than, say, a focus on one issue like reproductive rights or the ordination of women. Our doings have three foci.

together ideas and issues, music and readings, symbols and silence that coalesce into meaningful, prayerful celebrations. WATER liturgy resources are used extensively; WATER staff collaborate on liturgies for small groups and large, for every occasion imaginable and, increasingly, with the rich input of many traditions. These insights we communicate through our quarterly newsletter, **WATERwheel**, and the word spreads.

A third dimension of WATER's work is best described as theo-political. As an educational organization we try to bring to public expression the religious sensibilities of feminists so they can be part of the larger conversation. This dimension of our work includes the newly formed Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network to link and fortify that group of committed scholars and activists. It includes the countless responses to calls from journalists and scholars who seek to understand what feminists want in religion. It speaks to our social location in Washington, as we sign on to and collaborate in many efforts for social change - from the elimination of the death penalty to real welfare reform, from reproductive health to gay/lesbian/bisexual and transgendered issues both in church and society. This is hard, often thankless, sometimes even dangerous work. But it is what puts us in touch with colleagues and keeps us grounded in the real struggle

*You and readers like you respond generously. That is part of our history.*

First, we try to think and write about theological and ethical sticky wickets—the hard stuff—and in so doing promote inclusion, participation and equality. We believe that what ethicist Daniel Maguire calls "the renewable moral energy of religion" can be put to the task of social change only when the religious concepts and practices themselves are inclusive. Because of this work, WATER staff lecture and publish endlessly here and abroad. Through such travel we meet people who are engaged in similar work. And thus the Alliance grows.

A second focal point for us is feminist spirituality, especially as it is articulated in liturgy and ritual. WATER is well known for this work throughout the world, where celebrations and worship services of many stripes bear the unmistakable creativity of Diann Neu and colleagues. These women are unafraid of experimenting; they bring

gles for justice which are why we exist.

Our only complaint has been that we need to ask for funds in order to move ahead to hire more staff to increase outreach and programs to empower more people to do more justice. It does not seem like a lot to ask, but asking is hard. We've gotten better at it over time, convinced that what we are about is important and worthy of being supported. You and readers like you respond generously. That is part of our history.

WATER's future looks bright based on this history. It will be shaped as its history has been: by necessity, not ideology; people, not profit; commitment, not which way the wind is blowing.

*Mary E. Hunt, Ph.D., feminist liberation theologian and ethicist, is co-founder and co-director of WATER.*

# Feminist Liberation Theology: Wells for India

by Mary Grey

*Editor, author and feminist theologian as well as activist, Mary Grey, with her husband Nicholas and Ramsahai Purohit, established Wells for India in 1987 to bring safe water to impoverished communities. The project has since expanded beyond well-building to include water-harvesting and medical, social and educational work. Professor Grey formerly taught Feminism and Christianity at the Catholic University of Nijmegen, Netherlands, and Contemporary Theology at the University of Southampton, England; she is currently editor of the journal Ecotheology. Her latest book, **Beyond the Dark Night**, was published last year. Returned recently to England from a visit to India in connection with the wells project, she shares these observations with WATER:*

Whereas the projects are all in Rajasthan in the North, I wanted in this visit to make contact with women's theological groups in the south. So I was able to visit Gabriele Dietrich in Madurai. She is naturalized Tamil, German by birth, and married to theologian Bas Wielenga, who is Dutch by birth, now a Tamil. In addition to teaching theology in the Tamil Nadu Seminary (in Gabriele's case, feminist theology), they have set up a Centre for Social Analysis which functions as a documentation and resource center for many social struggles. Gabriele in particular works for the rights of the fisherwomen in Tamil Nadu and is state representative for their union. Readers of Rosemary Ruether's book **Women Healing Earth** might remember a description of this struggle. Gabriele put our own projects in a wider social context.

After visiting projects in the Nilgiri Hills we went on to Mumbai (Bombay). Here I did some teaching and met some remarkable women's groups. One in particular is called "Satya Shodak," meaning Search for Truth. Their contact woman, Crescy John, teaches feminist theology in the

seminary. She arranged the meetings for me. Satya Shodak is strongly activist. Participants, young and old, were enthusiastic about their struggles and feminist theology. Some were working in the slums - one for 30 years. All were concerned about the low status of women in India and the oppression of tribal and Dalit women (Dalits are the so-called "untouchables"). Even though I met other groups - YWCA women trying to develop their mission statement to meet changing circumstances, a Hindu woman pursuing a Women's Studies course who went one day a week into the villages to animate an income-producing scheme for poor women, and seminarians from the Catholic seminary - it was Satya Shodak to whom I felt most committed. I told them about the "Shared Garden" initiative and they are very keen to have material and for women in India to be included in the process.

My conviction was strengthened after this visit that in India there is a different way of doing theology. There is far less of a clash between "academic" and "grassroots" theology, and much more of a conviction that authentic theology is engaged in the struggle against poverty and oppression. There is also a sensitivity to the fact that Christianity is a very small player on the faith scene - as low as 2 per cent in certain parts of the country - and that this calls for a different way of relating to other faiths, and a deep humility on the part of Christians (something the Vatican finds hard to understand!).

My other observation as regards progress in Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) is that integration of women's perspectives and participation is growing steadily. This was the most encouraging thing I saw - the growing awareness that projects are not just questions of technical progress, but that the social position of women must be tackled, whatever the project. In fact, one organization, supported by Christian Aid, is called Astha, "Faith in the People," and works solely with awareness-raising and empowerment techniques.

So much of Rajasthan is desert, or semi-desert; women suffer more than anyone, since fetching water is women's work. Surely here, as much as anywhere, there is need for a Shared Garden.

## In Memory of Her

From WATER:

We wish Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza every blessing on the occasion of her 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. Religious feminists around the world join the chorus praising Elisabeth for her creative work, her commitment to justice and her friendship. "In memory of her," indeed!

And special blessings on the wonderful women who, with **Mary E. Hunt, Diann L. Neu and Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza**, inspired, abetted and celebrated the start of WATER 15 years ago: **Mary Burke, Mary Collins, Barbara Cullom, Sonya Dyer, Madonna Kolbenschlag, Jackie McMakin and Jean Martensen.**

Always in mind, too, are the remarkable women and men since then who have supported, sustained and encouraged the Alliance that was and is WATER.

Shared Garden II participants mourn the death of **Patricia McCormick** who was killed in a car accident. She was dedicated to civil rights, persistent in her quest for social change, a seeker after truth in its many forms.

Welcome to **James Edward Lapp Stoltzfus**, son of **Cindy Lapp and Eric Stoltzfus**, brother of **Cecilia**, now a WATERboy. You may hear him in the background when you call the WATER office.

From **Sr. Frances Cunningham, Milwaukee WI:**

In memory of **Sr. Joselma Gartner** who died on July 1, 1997.

From **Tracey Weis and Tom Ryan, Lancaster, PA:**

In celebration of **William Joseph Pearson**, born February 18, 1998, beloved son of our dear friends **Kathy Brown and Ted Pearson.**



What is a spirituality that works for the new millenium? How do we live the spiritual life? The search for meaning is age-old. This liturgy focuses on women's spirituality and invites those from many generations to speak their spiritual wisdom. A version was celebrated at a Call to Action conference in Detroit MI and at a Women-Church Convergence meeting in Washington DC. Let it be a model for your community.

### Preparation

Invite three women to be presiders, three to be candle lighters, and six to read a spirituality quote. Put candles on a table in the center of a circle of chairs. Prepare three baskets of breads (corn, herbed and wheat) and three glasses of drinks (milk, cider and wine), and give them to the presiders.

**Gathering Song:** "Walk Through These Doors" by Marsie Silvestro, *Crossing the Lines*, c 1987.

Grandmothers whose names we call.  
Ancient ones whose spirits have flown.

*(Refrain)*

Walk through these doors with blessing.  
Walk through these doors with peace.  
Walk through these doors as holy ones.  
Enter the words we speak.

### Call to Celebration

*(Presider 1 proclaims)*

Welcome to this women-church Eucharist, "Praise the Spirit of Faithful Women." Spirituality is about paying attention, looking more carefully, breathing deeply, and uniting with Sophia-Wisdom, starting anew and attending again. It involves self, relationships and community. It is concerned about justice, the earth and right relations.

We gather to praise faithful women for keeping the spirit alive during hard times, for living the connections between spirituality and sexuality, for treasuring the relationship between spirituality and the earth. Let us take a moment of quiet to prepare for this Eucharist. *(Pause)*

### Blessing the Candles

*(Three people each light a candle and pray a verse, followed by all chanting)*

**Chant:** "Ruah" by Colleen Fulmer, *Cry of Ramah*, c 1985.

Ruah, Ruah, Breath of God within us.  
Ruah, Ruah, Spirit of our God.

Blessed are you, Enlightening Ruah,

# Praise the Spirit

By Diann L. Neu

For you guide us on the road to freedom.

*Chant*

Blessed are you, Transforming Spirit,  
For you inflame us with passion for justice.

*Chant*

Blessed are you, Ever-Present Wisdom,  
For you sustain us with your inspiration.

*Chant*

Cup your hands in front of this light and gesture it toward your eyes and body three times as a blessing. *(Blessing)*

### Exorcising Abusive Spirits

*(Presider 1 says)*

In order to focus on good spiritual powers, we must let go of abusive powers. The hurts, violations and disempowerment of each belong to all. From all of these let us exorcise ourselves this day.

We respond to each abuse of power by saying three times the words: "Be gone! Be gone! Be gone!" while adding a gesture using our arms, legs, bodies, heads to symbolize a casting off of the abusive spirits.

*(Demonstrate gestures)*

1. The fears we have of our own powers -  
Be gone! Be gone! Be gone!
2. Believing our bodies and souls are unworthy and less than beautiful -  
Be gone! Be gone! Be gone!
3. Violence against women in all forms -  
Be gone! Be gone! Be gone!
4. Jealousy and aggression that separate woman from woman, sister from sister -  
Be gone! Be gone! Be gone!
5. Structures of racism and apartheid that divide individuals, groups and countries -  
Be gone! Be gone! Be gone!
6. Chains of classism, sexism, heterosexism, ageism that bind people everywhere -  
Be gone! Be gone! Be gone!
7. All forms of patriarchy and kyriarchy that suffocate our spirits -  
Be gone! Be gone! Be gone!

### Cleansing with Herbs

*(Presider 2 lights the herbs and says)*

Let us cleanse this space so good spirits can fill it. This incense bowl is filled with sage and cedar. Sage represents wisdom. Cedar drives away unfriendly spirits. Breathe in their healing powers as the incense passes your way. *(She walks around the inner circle with the incense.)*

**Song:** "Sing A Gentle Love Song" by Kathy Sherman, *Gather the Dreamers*, c 1991.

Sing a gentle love song to the earth,  
Fill the air with music for her healing.  
Then be still and you will hear  
Her love song forever sung to you.

### Words about Spirituality

Let us listen to the words by faithful women about spirituality.

**Song:** "Claim Your Power" by Marsie Silvestro, *Crossing the Lines*, c 1987.

Woman, let the spirit in your heart  
rise up, rise up, to claim your power. *(2x)*

"Christian spirituality means eating together, sharing together, drinking together, talking with each other, receiving each other, experiencing God's presence through each other, and, in doing so, proclaiming the gospel as God's alternative vision for everyone, especially for those who are poor, outcast, and battered... A feminist Christian spirituality calls us to gather together the *ekklesia of women* who, in the angry power of the Spirit, are sent forth to feed, heal, and liberate our own people who are women."

Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza,  
**In Memory of Her**

"All the way to heaven is heaven."  
Catherine of Sienna, in Dorothy Day, *By Little and By Little*

"Our current spiritual dilemma, then, lies in how to link the personal with the public dimensions of life; how to make private spirituality the stuff of public leaven in a world fiercely private and dangerously public at the same time. The fact is that simple spiritualities of creed and community and cooperation are no longer enough. We need now, surely, a spirituality of contemplative co-creation. Carrying on God's work in the world is the spiritual life."

Joan Chittister, **WomanStrength**

**Song:** *(Repeat)*

"Spirituality is rooted in desire. We long for something we can neither name nor describe, but which is no less real because of our inability to capture it with words."

Mary Jo Weaver, **Springs of Water in a Dry Land**



# of Faithful Women



"If there be anywhere on earth a lover of God who is always kept safe from falling, I know nothing of it, for it was not shown me. But this was shown: that whether in falling or in rising we are always kept in the same precious love."

Julian of Norwich, **Revelations of Divine Love**

"Spirituality means making choices about the quality of life for oneself and for one's community."

Mary E. Hunt, **Fierce Tenderness**

**Song:** (Repeat)

## Shared Reflection

(*Presider 1 says*)

We are on holy ground and in holy space. What comes to your mind when you hear "praise the spirit of faithful women?" What would you like others to praise you for? Let words of praise emerge from within you now and speak them. (*Sharing*)

**Song:** (Repeat)

## Presentation of Breads

(*The First Blesser says*)

Just as there is no one spirit that symbolizes all of creation, so there is no one bread or drink that symbolizes the diversity and power of spirituality. So today we bless three breads - corn bread, herbed bread and wheat bread - and three drinks - milk, cider and wine. We express gratitude for our spirituality by sharing them.

(*The three blessers present the breads and drinks by carrying them to the center, speaking the words over them, and placing them on the altar.*)

**First Blesser:** I bring corn bread to our table to symbolize Mother Corn. She

is the promise of food and life. Let this corn bread remind us to give back what we have received.

**Second Blesser:** I bring herbed bread to our table to represent women's wisdom. Let it symbolize women's gifts and the new life that springs up when we share them in solidarity.

**Third Blesser:** I bring wheat bread to our table today. It is common bread. Let it remind us that women are as common as a common loaf of bread and we are rising!

## Blessing of Breads

Let us touch bread and pray together:  
Blessed are you, Sustenance of All Life.  
We give you thanks for the breads we break and eat. They come from the fruits of the harvest, symbol of the fullness and ripeness of autumn. We thank you for the ripeness of women we have known: middle aged women, women who speak out in wisdom against all that hold us back from fullness. May women be filled with life.

**Song:** "Take This" by Marsie Silvestro, Moonsong Productions, c 1985.

Take this all of you.. and eat this all of you,  
And remember when you're broken  
And life seems to pour out,  
I am here... I'm with you.

## Presentation of Drinks

**First Blesser:** I bring milk to our table today to remember the children. It is women's milk that nurtures and feeds all generations. Let this milk remind us of our responsibility to pass spirituality on to the next generations.

**Second Blesser:** I bring cider to our table today to celebrate the earth and its harvest. The apple is good and women are holy. Let it remind us of the harvest and the holiness of all women.

**Third Blesser:** I bring wine to our table today to remember the joy of women's spirits and the power of our sexuality and spirituality. Let this wine represent the ebb and flow of women's cycles.

## Blessing of Drinks

Let us touch the drinks and pray together:  
Blessed are you, Lover of All Life. We give you thanks for the cups we drink. They come from the fruits of summer. We thank you for the passion and joy of women we have known: young women, women-children and adolescents, women who

dance out their spirit and celebrate all that yearns in us for completion. May women be filled with joy.

**Song:** "Take This" ...drink this...

**Communion:** (*The blessers pass around baskets of bread and cups of drink.*)

## Blessing of Spiritual People

(*Presider 3 says*)

Who is a spiritual person? How do we recognize one? We close, blessing aspects of spiritual people, blessing ourselves.

A spiritual person laughs and enjoys life.

**Response:** Let us laugh and enjoy life.

A spiritual person resists domination.

**Response:** Let us resist domination.

A spiritual person notices new life.

**Response:** Let us notice new life.

A spiritual person gazes at sunsets.

**Response:** Let us gaze at sunsets.

A spiritual person pays attention.

**Response:** Let us pay attention.

A spiritual person sees things as they are.

**Response:** Let us see things as they are.

A spiritual person lives deeply in touch with her own and the world's troubles.

**Response:** Let us live deeply in touch with our own and the world's troubles.

A spiritual person lets herself welcome a bold, daring, new adventure.

**Response:** Let us let ourselves welcome a bold, daring, new adventure.

What else do we want to say about spiritual people? Tell us and we will respond. (*Sharing*)

## Sending Forth

Filled with the faith of our foremothers, let us go forth keeping the spirit alive during hard times, living the connections between spirituality and sexuality, and treasuring the relationship between spirituality and the earth.

**Song:** "Dance-In the New Day" by Kathy Sherman, **Dance In The Dawn**, c 1993.

Prophets go forth to proclaim your stories.  
Go with your visions  
And go with your dreams.  
Dreamers go quickly, the night is waiting  
For us to dance in the new day.

Diann L. Neu, MDiv, STM, MSW, co-director of WATER, is a feminist liturgist and licensed psychotherapist.

# Power in the Blood

By Cynthia Lapp

I recently gave birth to two projects. The first to be delivered had the longest gestation, about 4 1/2 years. The second had the traditional human span of nine months. The latter, Jamie, was birthed in five hours with a midwife, nurse and my husband in attendance. The first, a thesis entitled "There's Power in the Blood: Women, Christian Ritual and the Blood Mysteries," arrived in weekly increments with many participant observers and unwitting helpers.

My interest in ritual has developed over the years as I have discovered how helpful it can be in making life transitions, working out personal issues and deepening a sense of the holy present among us. In the Mennonite tradition, of which I am a part, ritual and liturgy are generally frowned upon. There is a fear that goes back to the Reformation of anything "too Catholic." My goal for the thesis was to design rituals that would be accessible to Mennonite women by making the biblical text a central element. I wanted to include some traditional music (with inclusive language) but also to stretch us a bit by tackling the sensitive

issue of our bodies and blood. I chose to look at menarche, childbirth and menopause, the blood mysteries, as life transitions that are physically and spiritually important to women but ignored or disdained by the church.

Teenage girls are receiving attention these days for their low self-esteem and body image problems. I see the recognition of menarche among a group of women as an opportunity for a blossoming young one to receive positive reinforcement of who she is and is becoming. It is also a chance for her to commit herself to a community of women, to articulate her sense of herself and the holy and to begin taking on a chosen adult responsibility. The biblical text I used is Numbers 27:1-11, 36:1-13, the story of Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah, five daughters who stand up to the tradition, Moses and God to plead for land to which they are entitled.

Childbirth is not a universal experience for women, but those who do not give birth often use it as a metaphor. While the birth of children is recognized by the church in baptism or christening, the experience of

the mother is not. Birth can be a life-changing and spiritual experience but the church has ignored this. My second ritual is a setting for the mother to share her hopes and dreams for the birth and for herself as a mother. The biblical text is Mary's Magnificat, Luke 1: 46-55, an acknowledgment of the power of God and the power of birth.

Menopause is in the news a lot but not from a Christian perspective. This is a life change that signifies moving toward wisdom, toward fertility in a new sense, dancing in the blooming desert. The biblical figure I chose for the third ritual is Miriam and the text is Exodus 15: 19-21. The wise woman prophet leads women in a dance in the desert. They rejoice as they step out on the journey.

My work is built on the work of many women who came before, who saw the need to acknowledge the holy in their lives. I am grateful to them and for the opportunity to continue the exploration.

*Cynthia Lapp, MTS, is staff member at WATER.*

# Write On!

By Carol Murdock Scinto

Our letterbox of late has included an 'inpouring' of ideas from readers for future **WATERwheel** coverage, and a shower of appreciation for our herbal thank you in December. Sprinkled lavishly in between are messages of thanks, encouragement, praise and empathy.

Suggested liturgies for upcoming newsletters range from personal to universal, beginnings to endings: for a woman whose marriage is over; for one who is widowed; for a birthday (any birthday); for individuals, families or institutions dealing with mental illness or brain deterioration; for young children just learning about ritual; for an adoption; for new ventures - in school, career or community.

Suggested topics for articles include: ways for "small town America" to practice what **WATER** preaches; details of what different women's groups do and how they do it; practical means to introduce spouses, small children, teens, extended families and friends to feminist issues; accounts of

women's faith journeys - successes, failures, and what comes next.

The mint-thyme-sage tea and accompanying ritual gave inspiration to the soul-thirsty. Wrote Yeyere Ife of San Diego, CA: "The work that you do revitalizes all that is important in me and sustains that which makes a difference in the world. The herb packet and ritual inspired the Winter Solstice Celebration in my community. Thank you!" Said Julie Henkener, Houston, TX: "I'm sitting here with my tea... You all provide me with a connection that is very important to me as I sit 'on the fringes' of the church... And as a feminist and engineer at NASA I just wanted to let you know that it is such a relief to have found (finally) resources for my spirituality..." And Dorothy Jean Furnish, Louisville, CO, took time to say "how impressed I am with the letter received this morning... All of your letters have a creative touch, and a symmetry which I admire." From Dianne McCoy of Edmonton, Canada, came word that "I especially appreciated and responded to

Diann's 'Return Thanks' insert with this mailing - it spoke to me as a woman and a gardener." Said another brief message from Barbara Kuczynski and Annamae Kenny of Syracuse, NY, "We really enjoyed the quote (from one of our favorites, too!) from Hildegard and your applying it to herbs."

On behalf of "the back streets and byways of America," Genevieve Chavez of Las Cruces, NM, observed, "your work is sometimes all we get to behold of feminist religious work. I hope you know how valuable you are, speaking, doing, interpreting and acting on behalf of the many (or millions) who are earning a living, raising a family or somehow struggling along without feeling like what we do really matters in the big picture of feminism or societal change."

We'll quote more postings in future issues. Meanwhile, write on!

*Carol Murdock Scinto is staff member and copy editor at WATER.*

Deming, Lynne M. and Kathleen C. Ackley, eds. *IN GOOD COMPANY: A WOMAN'S JOURNAL FOR SPIRITUAL REFLECTION*. Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 1998 (\$14.95).

An innovative format that is journal, calendar and spiritual reading/gazing all at once. Some people will want to keep these year after year.

Duncan, Jacqui. *WASHINGTON FOR WOMEN: A GUIDE TO WORKING AND LIVING IN THE WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA*. Lanham, MD: Madison Books, 1997 (244 pages, \$16.95).

Not for Washingtonians only, this guide includes info on many national groups, advocacy outfits and internships.

Farah, Najwa Kavar. *A CONTINENT CALLED PALESTINE: ONE WOMAN'S STORY*. London: SPCK, 1996 (136 pages, 6.99 pounds).

Palestinian Christians are uniquely positioned to deal with exile and contradiction. This is the forthright story of one woman's efforts.

Falk, Marcia. *THE BOOK OF BLESSINGS*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996 (529 pages, \$50).

This feminist prayer book is a treasure. The words sing, the ideas evoke, the prayers flow. Buy it with gratitude.

Haydock, Linda and Kathy McFaul et al. *WE ARE SISTERS: PRAYER AND RITUAL FOR WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT*. Seattle: Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center, 1997 (157 pages, \$15; \$8 for tape).

Good models for groups to follow and adapt. Includes some music and info on how to obtain more.

McEnroy, Carmel. *GUESTS IN THEIR OWN HOUSE: THE WOMEN OF VATICAN II*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996 (309 pages, \$15.95).

Creatively contributing to Catholic history, Dr. McEnroy details the work of 23 women auditors at Vatican II. Remarkable that we knew so little about them.

Orenstein, Debra and Jane Rachel Litman. *LIFECYCLES: JEWISH WOMEN ON BIBLICAL THEMES IN CONTEMPORARY LIFE*, Vol. 2. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1997 (401 pages, \$24.95).

These volumes add up to a wonderful compendium of Jewish women's wisdom for everyone. Ellen Umansky on friend-

## Resources

ship; Judith Plaskow on transformation; Susan Schnur on justice; Drorah Setel on Miriam. One essay enriches the other.

Tillemans, Rose Welch. *SAVORING GRACE: A YEAR AT PEACE HOUSE*. Winona, MN: St. Mary's Press, Christian Brothers Publications, 1997 (103 pages, \$12.95).

A spiritual journal of depth and the poetic worldview of a justice seeker, this book will demythologize life among street people and re-energize those who want company on a feminist religious search.

Weatherby, Georgie Ann and Susan A. Farrell, eds. *THE POWER OF GENDER IN RELIGION*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996 (159 pages, \$19.65).

A useful text for college courses dealing with research methods in studying religion.

Weisenfeld, Judith and Richard Newman, eds. *THIS FAR BY FAITH: READINGS IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN'S RELIGIOUS BIOGRAPHY*. New York: Routledge, 1996 (312 pages, \$59.95).

A powerful collection of biographies which will help readers locate and appreciate the struggles of these foresters.

World Council of Churches. *LIVING LETTERS: A REPORT OF VISITS TO THE CHURCHES DURING THE ECUMENICAL DECADE - CHURCHES IN SOLIDARITY WITH WOMEN*. Geneva: WCC Publications, August 1997 (50 pages, \$5.95).

Much more needs to be done for churches to change their patriarchal ways, but this report makes clear that feminists of the Christian faith are engaging in constructive dialogues around the world.

### Music

Connors, Chris. *A PERFECT SHADE OF BLUE*. East Arlington, MA (PO Box 1535; 02174): ProphetSongs, 1997 (\$15 compact disks, \$10 cassette tapes; \$10 song books).

Lovely music to stir, soothe, make you smile. Good for feminist liturgies.

### Video

Women's HIV/AIDS Consortium. *MOTHERS WITH HIV: THE JOURNEY*. Available through the American Red Cross of the St. Paul, MN, area, tel. 612/291-3860, \$15; \$20 with planning guide.

Discussions on women and AIDS make important programs for local groups. This moving video opens things up powerfully.

### For Children

Appelt, Kathi. *I SEE THE MOON*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997 (24 pages, \$15).

A sweet children's story about the loving presence of the divine.

Kivel, Paul and Allan Creighton et al. *MAKING THE PEACE: A 15-SESSION VIOLENCE PREVENTION CURRICULUM FOR YOUNG PEOPLE*. Alameda, CA: Hunter House Publishers, 1997 (176 pages, \$24.95).

This work can't begin too early. Good ideas here for educators, families and religious groups. Coupled with *DAYS OF RESPECT: ORGANIZING A SCHOOL-WIDE VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM* (Ralph Cantor, et al) by the same publisher (56 pages, \$14.95), this makes a terrific resource for moving toward peace.

Bohler, Carolyn Stahl. *GOD IS LIKE A MOTHER HEN AND MUCH, MUCH MORE*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996 (32 pages, \$15).

The hard questions children ask deserve soft but full answers. This is a particularly nice one.

Brown, Judith Gwyn. *BLESS ALL CREATURES HERE BELOW: A CELEBRATION OF THE BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1996 (30 pages, \$6.95).

"Bless everyone and everything" seems a good religious maxim. This book teaches children how to include animals.

Gaines-Lane, Gretchen, LCSW-C. *MY MEMORY BOOK: A JOURNAL FOR GRIEVING CHILDREN*. Gaithersburg, MD: Chi Rho Press, 1995 (no page numbers, \$8.95).

Everyone grieves, but children need to learn how. This book helps a great deal.

Howard, Julie. *ONE OF A KIND*. Crayons, 1515 North 31st Ave., St. Cloud, MN 56303, 1991 (25 pages, \$6).

A songbook with upbeat music intended to foster children's self-esteem.

Sasso, Sandy Eisemberg. *IN GOD'S NAME*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1994 (32 pages, \$16.95).

A gorgeous start for children of all ages on the road toward inclusive religions. Another Sasso book is *BUT GOD REMEMBERED: STORIES OF WOMEN FROM CREATION TO THE PROMISED LAND*, a midrash of four women's lives.

# News and Notes

**Grace Duerksen** heads back to Kansas where she will finish her senior year at Bethel College after a year's internship at WATER. Grace came as part of the Washington Study Service Year sponsored by Eastern Mennonite University. She has made herself indispensable as the current "web mistress" and as a solid colleague in the office. She will be missed, but she will, like many interns before her, take WATER home.

**Pauline Maheux** arrived for a three-month stint in the office. She is an Ursuline sister from London, Ontario, Canada, with extensive experience in Peru. Pauline is learning the ins and outs of a small non-profit (especially the labor-intensive nature of the work). Her experience will prove invaluable when she returns in September to the Centre for Women and the Sacred, Brescia College, London, ON.

Shared Garden III in Recife will include **Monica Maher** of Harvard Divinity School back for her second Garden, **Amy Blumen-**

**shine** of Minneapolis, MN, and **Rebeca Alfaro** from New South Wales, Australia, among those from beyond Latin America.

**Diann Neu** and **Cindy Lapp** spoke with 40 youth participants at a United Methodist Seminar on Capital Hill in April. Their topic: Gender and Religion. Diann discussed ritual and Cindy talked about parenting.

The **Women-Church Convergence** meeting, co-ordinated by **Diann** and **Rose Mary Meyer**, and attended by **Mary, Pauline** and **Grace** in Washington DC the end of April included informative time with the Department of Labor and an effective interchange with Maureen Shea of the White House staff. **Diann** and **Cheryl Nichols** of SAS (a DC feminist base community) led the liturgy, "Praise the Spirit of Faithful Women: A Women-Church Eucharist" (which appears in this issue) and **Cindy** led the singing.

**Bella Abzug's** memorial service, attended by appropriately hatted **Mary Hunt**

and **Diann Neu**, was, in Mary's words, "a remarkable event, keynoted by **Hillary Rodham Clinton**, held in a room full of women in hats." Says Mary, "Hillary Clinton was awesome - a presence that reminded one of her 'friend' Eleanor Roosevelt, a hat that beat Bella's, a speech that was smart, funny and warm, with enough barbs at Congress to remind us of the reality of the late 1990's. She reported that Eleanor had sent her the message that Bella arrived safely in heaven and has already organized the Non-Governmental Angels. She also said that Bella was making sure that at least 51% of the angels are female since there are more women in heaven. And Eleanor Holmes Norton, Patricia Schroeder, Irene Natividad and Maxine Waters made strong, warm remarks about Bella - the woman, the force, the legacy. 'She did not need the House to have her impact,' said Norton. 'Her causes became law.' But let Bella have the last word: 'We must all wear the hat of an advocate.'"



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