

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

Twenty Years of WATER: What Difference Does It Make?

By Mary E. Hunt

WATER's twentieth anniversary is reason to celebrate. We are jubilant about the many forms of collaboration that have brought us this far. Working with religious feminists around the world who seek faith-based social change together, we have plenty of plans for the future. We are grateful for the Holy One's blessings.

Still, we ponder what difference we make in a world seemingly more rent than ever by injustice, more resistant to efforts to include and diversify, more divided by race, class, nationality, and sexuality. It is not that we expected to change the world in twenty years. But we would be remiss if we did not ask,

change. We nurture that commitment with both intellectual resources—books, lectures, workshops—and with spiritual resources—liturgies, counseling, prayer—so that we can create strategic efforts at peace and justice.

Our commitment was tried sorely this year when war broke out over the world's protests and our best efforts to stop it. We noted the proliferation of macho religious language and imagery to bolster the bellicose. We were struck by the predominance of male religious figures even in the peace movement. We wondered whether anything we had done had made any difference, not just in the peace movement but in the past twenty

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and invite others to ponder with us, what difference WATER makes and use the results for future planning.

When we started in the spring of 1983, we had no game plan, no blueprint for an organization. We made our way as we went, as our Latin American sisters counseled. For twenty years we have analyzed and responded to the needs of our time to create a place and a movement of people who believe that feminist religious commitment can catalyze social

years. In the public forum it was not obvious, but we hoped for the best.

Looking back, and with the humility one develops after two decades of working for a small non-profit, let me offer several reflections on what difference we have made, inviting you to join the conversation.

First, we of WATER are different, profoundly different than if we had done some other kind of work. WATER began

(Continued on page 2)

In This Issue

Twenty Years of WATER:	
What Difference Does It Make?	1
Editorial	2
In Memory of Her	3
WATER in Action	3
Liturgy: A Feminist Funeral	4
WATER In Collaboration	6
Resources	7
Mark Your Calendar	8

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for Our 20th Anniversary!

Thank you for your generous support of WATER. Your financial gift for our 20th Anniversary signals your investment in the future of WATER and feminist religious work. In addition to your regular donation you can partner with us by giving stocks and frequent flier miles, by naming WATER in your will, or by transferring ownership of a life insurance policy to WATER. *Call Diann for more details, (301) 589-2509.*



Mary Condren (l), director of the Institute for Feminism and Religion in Dublin, Ireland, spoke at WATER on "Feminist Theology and Spirituality in Ireland." She shares her book, *The Serpent and the Goddess: Women, Religion, and Power in Celtic Ireland*, with Sister Catherine Pinkerton (r) of NETWORK.

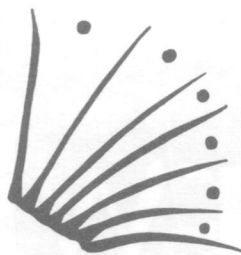
Editorial

Many signs indicate that feminist work in religion is becoming increasingly more difficult by the day. Several well-established centers are facing serious decisions about their futures. Re-Imagining in Minneapolis is talking about closing their office but continuing their publication. The Center for Women and Religion in Berkeley is scrambling for funding to keep its doors open despite more than twenty years as a women's organization in a consortium of theological schools. This sobering news causes us at WATER to double our efforts to continue our work.

Feminist religious publishing is equally under fire. Many classic texts in the field are no longer in print. Publishing houses are rumored to be turning down feminist work on the grounds that it may not sell. Several feminist religious journals are barely holding on as electronic publication takes hold and ideological swings to the right threaten their future.

That such necessary resources are seen as expendable luxuries in hard economic times creates a dangerous situation. Imagine a world without what we have come to rely on for intellectual, spiritual, and strategic nourishment. Meanwhile conservative religious groups and publishers flourish and continue to have a disturbing influence on public policy. Feminist work is more important than ever to counter such moves and to provide other models.

Twenty years later, as the accompanying article indicates, WATER continues to provide programs, projects, and publications for feminists in religion. We encourage you, our readers, collaborators, and supporters to broaden your horizons. Increase your financial support for WATER and support our sister centers and related projects as well. It is an investment in our own and our children's best interests, and there was never a better time.



(Continued from page 1)

as a response to the need for women to do theology, ethics, and ritual unfettered by the constraints of patriarchal religion. Diann Neu and I, who founded the organization, come from the Catholic tradition. In the early 1980s there was simply nowhere for us as Catholic feminists called to priesthood and prophecy to work. There still isn't any place in that kyriarchal church. Yet, from our starting point in a changing, diverse neighborhood up over the Debe's Cafeteria and the Special Effects Hair Salon, we have done all that our colleagues in academic and religious institutions do, and then some.

Countless interns, visiting scholars, volunteers, and other colleagues who come to use WATER's ever-growing Carol Murdock Scinto Resource Center and to be part of the office community are different too. Future feminist leaders train here. Wonderful feminist dissertations in Portuguese, Swedish, and English have been written here. Dozens of women with disabilities participate in our job-training program with great success. Each person contributes to the network, while together we help to create a new reality.

While we have not necessarily had the impact we would like at the heart of a patriarchal society and kyriarchal institutions, we have at least carved out places at the margins where we can live and work with integrity. The deeper, broader impact is a goal for the next decade.

Second, I submit that things would be much worse without WATER. While this sounds like a low threshold of expectation, given the pernicious power of unbridled corporate greed, unchallenged U.S. hegemony, and unchecked religious fundamentalism of many stripes, it is energizing to realize what a contrast we provide because our values and commitments are different.

Our modest budget, ever in need of increase, is proof that a little goes a long way. Like well-prepared soil, money well spent can produce results without

*Future feminist leaders
train here.*

Twenty Years of WATER...

impoverishing some and enriching others. As a U.S.-based organization, WATER seeks to be a partner in international work—not the boss, a place for sharing resources—not imposing an ideology. Our international colleagues remind us of our role as U.S. citizens resisting from within our government's unjust practices and supporting the marginalized from our place of privilege. They also help us to see just how tenuous our privilege is and how isolated the U.S. is becoming in a world that wants globalized justice.

As an organization made up of people coming mainly from Christianity, then from Judaism and pagan groups, we are now learning to become multi-religious. It is slow going but this is all part of the challenges that await us in the next decade.

Third, in twenty years we have come to know some of what works and what does not work with regard to feminist religiously grounded social change. For example, we know that it is all but fruitless to knock on the doors of patriarchal/kyriarchal institutions and beg to be allowed in on their terms. Rather, it is fruitful to live the alternative—whether ordination, socialization of resources, or the like—and let the good life speak for itself. We have seen too many women co-opted, too many people from racial minority groups instrumentalized to recommend a tamer strategy.

We know that it is virtually impossible to diversify groups that begin as white, Christian, and middle class. So we strive for inclusivity among stakeholders in all new projects we undertake. We know that children and young people have quite different fundamental experiences than adults, that time changes everything, and so we must listen to their experiences and include them in decision-making. Such learning is hard wrought but useful and necessary.

Finally, we know that we need more conversation to assess how other grassroots women's centers and groups

(Continued on page 3)

Twenty Years..

(Continued from page 2)

see the current reality and what we want to do together to assure that this trajectory of feminist work continues. We invite your collaboration:

1. Join us in Washington, DC, September 26-27 for a weekend of celebration and critical assessment of where we are as grassroots religious feminists. Individuals and groups are welcome. Bring your women's group, your work colleagues, and your friends. Together we will ask the hard questions, assess the achievements of our movement, celebrate the past twenty years, and map the future of feminist religious work for social change!

2. Take stock of your own progress in these past twenty years. What goals have you achieved? What lives have you affected? What structures have you changed? How has your group done so and what can you share with others about your work? successes?

3. Send us your wisdom. How has WATER had an impact on your life, your work? What do you see as the top three priorities for the next decade of WATER's work? How would you like to participate?

We celebrate our first twenty years by casting a broad net and asking the kinds of questions that we hope will take us into a different future. Thank you for your part in all of it.

Mary E. Hunt, Ph.D., feminist theologian and ethicist, cofounded and codirects WATER.

In Memory of Her

From Carolyn Farrell, Chicago, IL:

In loving memory of **Barbara Kutchera**, justice worker, feminist, loyal member of the BVM Network for Women's Issues, who gained eternal peace 12 May 2003 after a ten year dance with cancer. Her partner did not leave until the last waltz was over.

From the WATER community:

Congratulations to **Dr. Diann L. Neu** for receiving her Doctor of Ministry from the San Francisco Theological Seminary and publishing her dissertation, *Women's Rites: Feminist Liturgies for Life's Journey* (Pilgrim Press, 2003). (See p. 4-5 for one of the rites.)



(l. to r.) Diann L. Neu, Sara Newbery, and Mary E. Hunt in Buenos Aires, 1981.

In Memory of Sara Josephina Teresa del Perpetuo Socorro Newbery

WATER lost a longtime friend and collaborator on 8 June 2003, when Sara Newbery, Argentine anthropologist and feminist, died of accidental carbon monoxide poisoning in her apartment in Buenos Aires at the age of 81. Family and myriad friends mourn her untimely death and celebrate her marvelous life.

Safina was WATER's eyes and ears in Latin American for years, a staff collaborator who kept us apprised of feminist religious events and issues. She hosted our various trips to the Southern Cone. Her commitment to women, especially to women who are poor and marginalized, to indigenous women in her country, and to all who suffer from imperialism, was as unwavering as it was spirited. We continue it "in memory of her."

WATER in Action

WATER staff work in many settings to bring feminist religious insights into practice. **Mary E. Hunt** and **Patricia Beattie Jung** presented insights from their edited collection *Good Sex: Feminist Perspectives from the World's Religions* (with **Radhika Balakrishnan**) at the Society for Christian Ethics Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh. WATER sponsored a book discussion on the text as part of our Reading for Renewal Series.

Preaching is another medium we employ. **Mary E. Hunt** preached at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Baltimore, MD, on "A Certain Uncertainty;" at the Oaklands Presbyterian Church on "The Gift of Faiths;" and at the Washington National Cathedral on Trinity Sunday spelling out "The Mystery of Holy Ground" (visit <http://www.cathedral.org/cathedral/worship/sermons.shtml> for Real Audio and text).

We collaborate with feminist and justice groups. Women-Church Convergence met in Oakland, CA to participate in the fifth anniversary of A Critical Mass, a women's worship group that celebrates mass on the site of the old Oakland Cathedral. We cosponsored the Equality Forum in Philadelphia where **Mary E. Hunt** joined a panel of religious leaders in the National Religious Colloquy to discuss same-sex love and American religion. **Dr. Hunt** spoke at Union Theological Seminary on Father Mychal Judge, the New York City Fire Fighter's Chaplain who was killed at the World Trade Center on September 11.

WATER prayers and liturgies are used by communities worldwide. **Diann L. Neu's Peace Liturgies** have been reprinted by Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns, Mennonite Women, Caritas Carney Hospital, Women-Church groups, Franciscan Sisters of Mary, and the Women's Resource Centre in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Diann's "Blessings of Hands" was reprinted by the Disciples of Christ in LA, *Exchange Magazine*, St. Mary's Regional Medical Center, the Liverpool England Cathedral, the First Presbyterian Church of Covington, GA, and The Association of Pediatric Oncology Nurses. The Women's Ordination Conference reprinted her "A Magnificat for Healers."

WATER has lost several feminist friends over the past year, most recently our beloved Sara Newbery of Buenos Aires, Argentina. This liturgy honors them all.

Death will befriend each of us one day. This reality urges us to pay attention to the lasting memory we wish for ourselves and for our friends.

When a beloved friend dies, we need to take care how we say goodbye. We must think carefully about how we will carry on her legacy and tell her story. When a friend or colleague dies, the community wants to gather to bid farewell. For centuries, religious rituals offered space, time, and place in which the bereaved could express grief. These days, with changing belief patterns, many feminists find patriarchal religious rituals inadequate. They need more meaningful wake and funeral liturgies to say goodbye and to honor the loved one's spirit and beliefs.

This liturgy is a feminist farewell. I have used variations of it for the funerals of several friends and colleagues. Some of them had planned their services before they died. Their faces are before me now as I write this liturgical text to capture these sacred memorials. I published this liturgy in *Women's Rites: Feminist Liturgies for Life's Journey* (Pilgrim Press, 2003). Use this text as a guide for your own feminist farewell or for the one you will plan with another.

Use prayers, music, and readings that respect the beliefs of the bereaved and the deceased. Keep it short and simple. Grief is hard to bear. Observe significant dates, such as holidays and anniversaries, after a loved one's death.

Preparation

Prepare a memorial card that has a photo of the person and a favorite quote. Provide one for each participant. Celebrate this liturgy at the home of the loved one who has died, in the backyard of a friend's house, at a funeral home, or in a meaningful place such as by the sea. If there is a casket, place it in a central location and cover it with a quilt, shawl, or scarf of the beloved. If the person was cremated, place the urn of ashes on a central table and form a circle of chairs around it. Place pictures and symbols of the loved one around the room. Invite family and friends to sit in a circle around the casket, urn, or photos. Have one candle to represent the loved one and a candle for each participant.

Prelude Music: Play music that the loved one enjoyed.

Call to Gather

(Sound a bell, triangle, or tambourine to call people to gather around the casket, urn, or pictures. A family member, close friend, or community representative says:)

Welcome to this "Feminist Farewell: In Memory of Our Beloved N." (name of person). We gather to bid her a final farewell and to support her loved ones and one another in our sorrow. It is so hard to believe that N. is not here with us. Let us celebrate her power in life and in death and give thanks that we knew her.

Candle Lighting

(A family member, loved one or colleague offers a biographical sketch of the loved one and then lights a candle, saying:)

I light this candle to remember N., especially her ____ (for example, smile). You each have a candle. Light yours from this one and share a memory you have of N. (She passes the candle around the circle and all share a memory.)

Reading: "Song: 'Now let us honor with violin and flute'" by May Sarton¹

Now let us honor with violin and flute
A woman set so deeply in devotion
That three times blasted to the root
Still she grew green and poured strength out.

Still she stood fair, providing the cool shade,
Compassion, the thousand leaves of mercy,
The cherishing green hope. Still like a tree she stood,
Clear comfort in the town and all the neighborhood.

Pure as the tree is pure, young
As the tree forever young, magnanimous
And natural, sweetly serving: for her the song,
For her the flute sound and the violin be strung.
For her all love, all praise,
All honor, as for trees
In the hot summer days.

Song: "This Tough Spun Web," by Carolyn McDade² (or a favorite of the beloved or of the community)

We are the forest of ten thousand seeds
in shades of green that hold the sun.
With mingled roots our limbs together lean,
we are the many and the one.

We are the waters, each small drop of rain,
life-spawning ponds and stream-filled sea.
We run the blood that flows in living veins
to live and die that all be free.

Chorus: This circle opening moves with
deepened faith,
our lives to birth a living dawn.
As love renewed turns in our common way,
creating hope we carry on.

We are the wind-filled song
that sounds of joy and cries
from dungeons cast away.
The deep sung dreams of
those who labor on
to shape a just and caring way.

We are the sun-fired
passionate love of life,
the burning heart within the soul.

We are the love that grows
resisting chains
to free the bound and make us whole. (Chorus)

We are the hands proud ache to knead the bread
from golden seed we raise as corn.
We harvest thoughts to feed the hungering mind
translating life into a poem.
We are the faith beyond all mystery,
beneath the deep yon skies above.

A Feminist In Memoriam

by Dianr

We are the hope in solidarity
profoundly shaped by human love. (Chorus)
Our healing love, our hands reach out and touch
the cherished body, the quiv'ring mind.
Our lives like grass, like bread, like falling rain,
the ordinary our sublime.
Hold true this tough spun web as hard times
come and much be lost or taken away.
We struggle not for things that best be gone,
integrity rewebs our way. (Chorus)



Readings: Excerpts from Wisdom
(Read alternately by two readers.)

Proverbs 9:1, 5

Wisdom has built herself a house; she has prepared her meat, mixed her wine, and set her table... she calls to all in the city and in the towns... come and eat my food and drink the wine I have made.

Proverbs 1:20; 2:1, 6

Wisdom calls aloud in the streets... I will pour out my heart to you... tune your ear to wisdom and your heart to truth... then you will understand who Wisdom Sophia is and discover love of life... you will understand justice and the ways of happiness.

Proverbs 31: 25, 28, 29

Wisdom is clothed with strength and dignity, and she laughs at the days to come... Her children rise up and praise her; her husband, too, extols her. Many are the women of proven worth, but you have excelled them all.

Funeral: y of Her L. Neu

Proverbs 31:31

Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates.

Storytelling

N.'s works tell her praises. She was a wise and amazing woman. When you think of her, what memories do you want to share? Let us tell stories about her now. After each three we will sing, "You Can't Kill the Spirit." (Sharing)

Song: "You Can't Kill The Spirit," traditional

You can't kill the Spirit, She's like a mountain
Old and strong she lives on and on and on
(Sing three times)

Litany of Remembrance³

Leader: We will remember N., whom death has taken from our midst. In the rising of the sun and in its going down,

Response: We will remember her.

Leader: In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter,

Response: We will remember her.

Leader: In the opening buds and in the rebirth of spring,

Response: We will remember her.

Leader: In the blueness of the sky and in the warmth of summer,

Response: We will remember her.

Leader: In the rustling of leaves and in the beauty of autumn,

Response: We will remember her.

Leader: In the beginning of the year and when it ends,

Response: We will remember her.

Leader: When we are weary and in need of strength,

Response: We will remember her.

Leader: When we are lost and sick at heart,

Response: We will remember her.

Leader: When we have joys we yearn to share,

Response: We will remember her.

Leader: When we look in the mirror and see her smile in our eyes,

Response: We will remember her.

Leader: When we hear her voice in the sea,

Response: We will remember her.

Leader: When we feel her spirit in the mountains,

Response: We will remember her.

Leader: When we gather as a community,

Response: We will remember her.

Leader: When we celebrate our gifts as women,

Response: We will remember her.

Leader: So long as we shall live, she too shall live, for she is now a part of us, as we remember her.

Song: "Blessing Song," by Marsie Silvestro⁴

Bless you my sister, bless you on your way
You have roads to roam before you're home
And winds to speak your name.

So go gently, my sister,
let courage be your song

You have words to say in your own way
And stars to light your night.
And if ever you grow weary
And your heart song has no refrain
Just remember we'll be waiting
to raise you up again

And we'll bless you, our sister
bless you in our way
And we'll welcome home
all the life you've known
And softly speak your name. (Sing two times)
Bless you my sister, bless you on your way.

Closing Blessing: "She Whom We Love," by
St. John Chrysostom⁵

She whom we love
And lose
Is no longer
Where she was before.
She is now
Wherever we are.

Sending Forth

Let us go forth remembering N.
as we look up at the stars.
Let us love as she loved.
Let us carry on her legacy of love and justice.
Let us remember
that "she is now wherever we are."
Amen. Blessed be. Let it be so.

¹ May Sarton, "Song," *Collected Poems 1930-1973* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1974), 70.

² Carolyn McDade, "This Tough Spun Web," *This Tough Spun Web* © 1985, Surtesy Publishing. Audio recording.

³ "We Remember Them," adapted, *Rabbi's Manual*, © 1988, 130-31.

⁴ Marsie Silvestro, "Blessing Song," *Circling Free* © 1983, Moonsong Productions. Audio recording.

⁵ St. John Chrysostom, "She Whom We Love," in Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon, *Life Prayers* (New York: Harper-San Francisco, 1996), 341.

Diann L. Neu, D.Min., MSW, cofounded and
codirects WATER.



WATER works in collaboration with many women and feminist organizations. Mary E. Hunt provides a sample of some of our recent work.

Engaging Impasse: Circles of Contemplation and Dialogue

Nancy Sylvester, IHM, a WATER collaborator from our beginning, has created a new and exciting project designed to incorporate meditation and contemplation into work for social and ecclesial change. After more than a decade of lobbying through NETWORK, the Catholic social justice lobby group that she directed, and recognizing the deep difficulties we face in creating a just and sustainable world, Nancy and her colleagues looked to the contemplative dimension of many religious traditions as an untapped resource. They developed "Engaging Impasse: Circles of Contemplation and Dialogue," an invitation to join other religious people to reach beyond the usual repertoire of resources.

The project in its initial stage involves six small groups of a dozen or so women (many men were invited but not one responded affirmatively) gathering three times during the year for four days each to learn and develop techniques for contemplative listening. The theory is that such listening, when done individually and collectively, will add energy and insight to the process of social and ecclesial change.

I was an enthusiastic participant in the first round of meetings, a rich and fruitful experience. Each participant shared a story of impasse in her life and was listened to by a small group that received the story with reverence. Silence created space for feelings and insights to emerge,

for individuals and the group to go more deeply into the heart of the impasse, whether a personal relationship, a social problem, or an issue of injustice. Then there was time and quiet to discern the commonalities and differences among the impasses in the hope that we might cope more creatively in the future.

The process will deepen in subsequent meetings. Nancy and others will report on the results, hopefully sharing knowledge gleaned that can be used in many other settings where people struggle to move beyond impasse, not with "cheap grace" but with faithful integrity. For more see www.engagingimpasse.org.

Women, Religion, and Social Change II



Twenty years ago Harvard Divinity School held a conference on Women, Religion, and Social Change under the able leadership of Diana Eck, now director of the Pluralism Project. The conference brought together scholars and activists from a range of countries, faith traditions and perspectives in an unforgettable week of lectures, panels and personal interactions. The volume that resulted, *Speaking of Faith*, edited by Diana and Devaki Jain, includes classic articles by Sylvia Marcos, Judith Plaskow, and Fatima Mernissi.

On this 20th anniversary occasion, the Pluralism Project invited a number of the original participants as well as some of the member of its Women's Multi-Faith Network to a similar gathering to assess what had happened in the interim. I had attended the first event as a young scholar and went to this one as a member of the Network.

It was remarkable event characterized as much by gracious hospitality as stimulating discussion, as much by personal ex-

change as corporate results. More than a dozen of the original speakers, including Elizabeth Amoah, Vena Das, Beverly Wildung Harrison, Brigalia Bam, among others, were able to accept.

Of course we are all older now—Melanie May then a student organizer for the conference came back as dean of Colgate Rochester Divinity School—but hopefully with more wisdom to share. Lots of young students were in attendance; a panel of them told stories of their multi-religious experiences in college and graduate school, so different from what most older women had experienced, but proof that we are having an impact.

Many of the same difficult issues remain on the table twenty years later, for example, dealing with seemingly intractable religious differences such as are articulated in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The war in Iraq clarified the pernicious role of the U.S. in policing the world from its own gain, a reality that led Elsa Tamez from Costa Rica to reject the invitation to come to this country. We learned from her

in her absence.

New issues emerged of course: whether and how to globalize justice in the face of international injustice; how to hear and incorporate the wisdom of indigenous people around the world; how women in religious roles previously reserved to men can make a difference.

One discussion on feminism seemed to capture the dynamic of this meeting. A group of about a dozen women of varying ages, religions, nationalities, and ethnicities sat spellbound for more than two hours listening and sharing ideas. The conversation was rich with questions, unencumbered by certainties, and open to the range of experiences gathered in the circle. It was, for me, one of those conversations that confirmed my sense that women engaged in religiously-founded social change are capable of changing the world, both in how we act and in what we think. I can only imagine what we will accomplish in twenty more years. See <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~pluralism/>.

Resources

Anisfeld, Sharon Cohen, Tara Mohr and Catherine Spector, eds. *THE WOMEN'S SEDER SOURCEBOOK: RITUALS & READINGS FOR USE AT THE PASSOVER SEDER*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2003 (336 pages, \$24.95) and *THE WOMEN'S PASSOVER COMPANION: WOMEN'S REFLECTIONS ON THE FESTIVAL OF FREEDOM*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2003 (301 pages, \$24.95).

Excellent resources to create traditional rituals with new and vibrant meaning that reflect women's well-being.

Bauer-Maglin, Nan and Alice Radosh, eds. *WOMEN CONFRONTING RETIREMENT: A NONTRADITIONAL GUIDE*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003 (378 pages, \$22).

Women find creative ways to make use of all the time they are given. This inspiring and informational book is for all our crones who retire but are hardly retiring! Good hints and examples in this volume.

Berger, Teresa, ed. *DISSIDENT DAUGHTERS: FEMINIST LITURGIES IN GLOBAL CONTEXT*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001 (255 pages, \$24.95).

A rich harvest of years of women's creative liturgical work. *WATER's* Diann Neu leads the way with "Come, Sophia-Spirit." Longtime *WATER* colleagues Herta Leistner (Germany), Ute Seibert (Chile), and Coralie Ling (Australia), among many others, contribute both liturgies and insightful commentaries on their projects.

Castelli, Elizabeth A., ed., with Rosamond C. Rodman. *WOMEN, GENDER, RELIGION: A READER*. New York, NY: Palgrave, 2001 (550 pages, \$27.95).

An excellent basic text for an academic introduction to the field. Diverse disciplines and varied perspectives make clear how rich and nuanced the whole enterprise has become.

Eller, Cynthia. *THE MYTH OF Matriarchal Prehistory: Why an Invented Past Won't Give Women a Future*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2000 (276 pages, \$26).

Sure to incite some, excite others, this book is part of an important debate on

whether matriarchal societies existed. It is a good way to see how the arguments line up. What matters most, of course, is women's power now.

Gaventa, Beverly Roberts and Cynthia L. Rigby, eds. *BLESSED ONE: PROTESTANT PERSPECTIVES ON MARY*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002 (168 pages, \$19.95).

Protestants look at Mary with new eyes and new insights to benefit all.

Goldman, Karla. *BEYOND THE SYNAGOGUE GALLERY: FINDING A PLACE FOR WOMEN IN AMERICAN JUDAISM*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000 (275 pages, \$18).

Nineteenth century Jewish women began the move from the margin to the center of their tradition. The tale is told well in this book with helpful insights for women in other traditions.

Goudey, June Christine. *THE FEAST OF OUR LIVES: RE-IMAGING COMMUNION*. Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2002 (198 pages, \$20).

Feminists for the Reformed tradition confront the central matter of Eucharist in Christianity. The welcome conclusion is one of greater and greater inclusivity, both in imagery and practice.

Hardesty, Nancy A. *WOMEN CALLED TO WITNESS: EVANGELICAL FEMINISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY*. Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1999 (1984) (207 pages, \$15).

This second edition is a reminder to look anew at 19th century Christian feminism for models of equality.

Isherwood, Lisa and Elizabeth Stuart. *INTRODUCING BODY THEOLOGY*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998 (164 pages, \$16.95).

The *Introducing* series includes many themes in the field. This volume focuses on the ambiguous relationship between Christian theology and the body, especially women's bodies. All in the series are good primers for classroom use.

Lancaster, Sarah Heaner. *WOMEN AND THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE: A NARRATIVE APPROACH*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002 (198 pages, \$24).

The narrative approach is helpful for especially for those who want to tread the line between those who consider scripture authoritative and those who feel it must be handled with less rigidity. Regardless, texts do inform and transform lives so they are never trivial.

Manning, Joanna. *TAKE BACK THE TRUTH: CONFRONTING PAPAL POWER AND THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT*. New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2002 (176 pages, \$16.95).

A well-written personal and theoretical look at how "Catholic" is changing. Papal recalcitrance and expanding horizons make it a very expansive word according to this courageous and consistent author.

Mitchem, Stephanie Y. *INTRODUCING WOMANIST THEOLOGY*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002 (178 pages, \$20).

A valuable resource for an overview of womanist work in the field. Ideal for classrooms and study groups. It whets the appetite for more of the primary sources.

Poling, James Newton. *RENDER UNTO GOD: ECONOMIC VULNERABILITY, FAMILY VIOLENCE, AND PASTORAL THEOLOGY*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2002 (286 pages, \$27.99).

Male dominance, white supremacy and now economic vulnerability play a role in domestic violence. James Poling makes the case well and points toward creative solutions.

Prichard, Rebecca Button. *SENSING THE SPIRIT: THE HOLY SPIRIT IN FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1999 (150 pages, \$13.59).

A lovely approach to the spirit through the five senses. Read it and feel the difference spirit makes.

Roach, Catherine M. *MOTHER/NATURE: POPULAR CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003 (221 pages, \$19.95).

A powerful antidote to the naïve Mother Nature claims. Sure to cause welcome debate among ecofeminists that will sharpen analysis and practice.

Soelle, Dorothee and Luise Schottroff. *JESUS OF NAZARETH*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002 (2000) (158 pages, \$14.95).

A unique feminist collaboration. This book includes artwork as well as commentary on the various aspects of the life and impact of Jesus. Written in an accessible style with a good glossary.

Whitcomb, Holly W. *PRACTICING YOUR PATH: A BOOK OF RETREATS FOR AN INTENTIONAL LIFE*. Philadelphia, PA: Innisfree Press, Inc., 2002 (125 pages, \$19.95).

A practical guide for returning to center through simple but structured days for oneself. Give yourself a gift, buy this book.

Resources for Young People

O'Neal, Debbie Trafton, with illustrations by Benrei Huang. *ARE YOU SLEEPING?* Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2003 (32 pages, \$8.99).

A sweet children's book that teaches "God is watching, God is watching" to the traditional tune. Nice suggestions for activities and wonderful illustrations. Also, *TWINKLE, TWINKLE, LITTLE STAR* by the same author is a similarly styled gem that teaches "Twinkle, twinkle, shining bright in the velvet dark of night. Painted there by God above, watching over me with love."

Rain, Gwinevere. *SPELL CRAFT FOR TEENS: A WICCAN MAGIC BOOK BY A REAL TEEN WITCH*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 2002 (160 pages, \$12.95).

If your teen wants to be a witch, this is a good guide for how to do it. Emphasis on rituals shows how most religions work, namely, to provide ways to acknowledge and celebrate life's important times.



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

Address Service Requested

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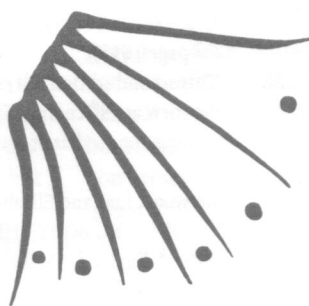
Mary E. Hunt, Ph.D. and Diann L. Neu, D.Min., Cofounders and Codirectors

For more information about WATER:
Phone 301-589-2509; Fax 301-589-3150
E-mail water@hers.com; Website www.hers.com/water

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