



waterwheel

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

The Power of Religious Language

By Mary E. Hunt

Religious language is far from trivial. That is why feminists in religion have worked long and hard to render our faiths in terms and images that reflect our deepest beliefs. Many opponents thought we were simply being fussy naming the divine Sophia, Mother, or Shekinah to make a theo-political point. But our insisting that women as well as men be named explicitly in discussions of humanity, our avoidance of potentially racist terms like "darkness" to refer to the negative, our rejection of the casual use of metaphors like "crippled" and "blind" to denote lesser conditions are all efforts to recognize the power of religious language. Inclusive translations of scripture and of the prayers used for worship in many traditions are all expressions of the fact that language has the power to shape reality, and religious language is no exception.

Pope Benedict XVI learned this the hard way in his recent lecture about Islam. Quoting without comment disparaging remarks about Islam from a 14th century Byzantine emperor,

argue that the powder keg was ready to be ignited, that the reaction was disproportionate to the statement, that some Muslims were simply looking for a way to express their outrage at the many insults they have endured from the West. The bottom line is that religious language, and language about religion, is deeply felt. The label it needs is "Use this with extreme caution."

Pope Benedict, the scholar and the religious leader, should have known better. Instead, he covered his error by saying that the words were not his, that he did not endorse them, that he was simply quoting. Fair enough. But what about the words that he and other religious leaders use that are theirs, that they do endorse, that they utter precisely so that others may quote them? Women, lesbian/gay people, and others who have been on the receiving end of those words know what I mean.

Theologians attend to words. Whether I want to or not, I monitor religious language, including my own. I learned from pioneer

The bottom line is that religious language, and language about religion, is deeply felt. The label it needs is "Use this with extreme caution."

Manuel II Paleologos, the Pope ran the risk of alienating Muslims as Christians have done in the past. Alienate he did. Now four attempts at apology later, decades of Christian-Muslim dialogue have been set back a century. The language of reconciliation is tricky, too. It is, after all, "religious," meaning part of what connects us.

Doctoral dissertations will parse what the pope meant and why he meant it, but the furor unleashed in Muslim communities over the remarks left no mistake about how ill-chosen the words were. Of course, some

feminist scholar Nelle Morton that in the beginning was not the word at all, but the hearing, the receptivity to listen. And that receptivity involves a context into which words are spoken. The power, then, is really with the listener, not the speaker, she claimed. This simple insight helps to explain why the use of religious language is crucial. Those who hear it do so on the basis of their experiences and their hopes.

Nelle's friend and colleague Anne McGrew Bennett extended this insight to explore

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WATER Library On-Line Thanks, Cathy Marple!

The Carol Murdock Scinto Resource Center at WATER is now available online under the name "waterlibrary." Carol was our longtime, peerless volunteer editor who now consults by phone on things knowable.

Go to www.librarything.com to access our collection. Log on with your own username and password (choose letters and/or numbers only—no special characters). Click on "Search." Under "Search Users," type: waterlibrary. Click on "See Catalog." You can now view all resources in our library and search by author, category, title, and more.

More than 3,000 of our books are now catalogued. All this is thanks to the good advice of Cathy Marple, computer expert who works in the library field (and Carol's daughter). Thousands more remain to be catalogued, but the summer interns got us off to a running start. Come help finish the job!



(top left clockwise) Shireen Mitchell, Nidza Vazquez, Erin Hanna, Aisha Taylor and Renu Beniwal of The Young Feminist Network enjoy an evening of intergenerational conversation at WATER.

Editorial

Rosemary Radford Ruether wrote "I have always looked at my students who are preparing for ministry or teaching as friends who are in the process of becoming peers and colleagues... For me the ministry of theological education is very much a ministry of teaching into equality as a fellow teacher-scholar." As her many former students who are now colleagues can attest, she lives these words. We embrace them at WATER as we expand the training dimension of what we do. Four future colleagues spent the summer as interns at WATER. Their reflections in this issue provide a window into the process, a look at how rich and welcome their contribution was to WATER.

Intergenerational sharing is essential if movements are to endure. Feminist sharing is not the top-down, mother-knows-best approach, but collegiality. WATER was abuzz several times this summer with women sharing their insights—practiced ministers with seminary students, Internet savvy young women tutoring their older colleagues on the finer points of Facebook and Ipods, new enthusiasm and insight for projects and tasks resultant of shared work.

We look forward to more interns—Shelley Seyler from American University is here this fall—as the creation of peers and the education of staff continue apace. We encourage other feminist groups to set up such programs. It is a way to make the future now.

In Memory of Her

From WATER: In gratitude for the exemplary and joyful life of **Sister Mary Luke Tobin** of the Loretto Community. Her pioneering work as a religious leader, including her active participation at Vatican II, combined with her many stances for justice and her love of dance made Luke beloved of so many. In memory of her indeed!

In memory of **Nancy A. McMurray**, artist, activist, and spirited friend. From her early years in Congo with Presbyterian missionary parents, to her later years as a Jewish feminist, Nancy lived cultural diversity with style.

In memory of **Verna J. Dozier**, Episcopal theologian and preacher. Verna graced the WATER office, as she did so many places in the region, with her biblical scholarship and her keen sense of justice. She pioneered racial justice in a predominantly white church with grace.

From **Peggy Hutaff**: In honor of **Lauren Dunn**, WATER Intern, Summer '05.

In memory of the beautiful life and ministry of **Jeanette Normandin, SSA**.

From **Carolyn Farrell**: In honor of BVM jubilees '06.

From **Diann Neu and Mary Hunt**: With sadness for the loss of cousin **Mary Jo Pierle** at age 60 from breast cancer. Women of style, beloved cousin, aunt extraordinaire, rest in peace now.

Creative feminist efforts in hymns, prayers, scholarly work, and new religious structures are evidence of taking the power of religious language seriously.

The Power...

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political, especially war-like language about the divine. Father, Lord, Ruler, King, she wrote, reflect those who hold power, those who have the power to describe the divine. It is no coincidence that the divine looks like them, and equally reasonable that the language functions to reinforce and reinscribe the social model that gave them the power in the first place.

Feminist scholars in religion take the task of reformulating religious language seriously, aware that without such changes the possibility of social change remains remote. A first step, still rejected by many mainline religious traditions, is inclusive language. The fact that exclusive language makes it hard for many people to pray and worship in their chosen faith community does not seem to faze those who argue against the adoption of guidelines that help to bring many people on board. My observation is that many groups, including some purportedly progressive communities, are far from the mark on this. I have attended many religious peace services, for example, where bellicose language about the divine and exclusive language about "all men of good will" has left me wondering if there is any hope that religion might be helpful at all in bringing about peace.

Another step is the creation of new words to capture the new demands for and reality of inclusion. Mary Daly is a wordsmith of the first order. She minted the phrase "if God is male, then male is God," and resurrected the word Crone to mean a "long-lasting one; Survivor of the perpetual witchcraze of patriarchy..." Joan Martin coined the term "blackwoman," all one word, to signal the inextricable link, the unbreakable wholeness of women of African descent in a racist and sexist culture. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza contributed "kyriarchy" to the working vocabulary of feminists. She writes: "This term, derived from the Greek words for 'lord' or 'master' (*kyrios*) and 'to rule or dominate' (*archein*)... redefines the analytic category of patriarchy in terms of multiplicative intersecting structures of domination. Kyriarchy is a socio-political system of

domination in which elite educated propertied men hold power over wo/men and other men. Kyriarchy is best theorized as a complex pyramidal system of intersecting multiplicative social structures of supremacy and subordination, of ruling and oppression." It has proved to be a very helpful way to think about the world we want to change.

A third step, perhaps the most practical, is how we go about the religious education of our children. I find this a major challenge since the media and most religious institutions in this increasingly fundamentalist period of history rely on images and symbols that contradict feminist insistence on diversity. For example, state funerals are usually conducted by white Christian men who talk in exclusivist old school ways. Unfortunately, the result is that their telegenic image says "minister" despite the many women in the field. When TV talk shows deal with religion they feature mostly men, and usually white Christian men and a few Jewish men at that, with the very occasional Catholic nun for good measure. How is a Muslim girl supposed to imagine herself as religious in the public forum, and what about a Buddhist boy? It takes enormous family force to overcome these social pressures, but we do it when we use inclusive language, cite women's texts, invite women's leadership, and respect interreligious sensibilities.

Creative feminist efforts in hymns, prayers, scholarly work, and new religious structures are evidence of taking the power of religious language seriously. Because words are, finally, necessary for wholesale communication of the messages of oneness and respect, of love and equality that emerge from religious conversations.

Mary E. Hunt, Ph.D., is cofounder and codirector of WATER.



Our Summer at WATER

By Gretchen Zelle, Katey Zeh, Sophie Kanter, and Rachel Ingraham

From Gretchen Zelle: My first experience of WATER was at the 2005 Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature, where Mary Hunt was leading a discussion of *A Guide for Women in Religion*. Breaking out of the lecture model common at that conference, we unhooked the chairs and arranged them in a circle so that we could speak as equals to one another. After the session, I was introduced to Mary by Wanda Deifelt, a Luther College professor and long-time WATER friend who had recently moved to the United States from Brazil. Mary invited me to come to WATER for an internship.

At first, I was intimidated by the prospect of living in Washington, DC. As I spent time in contact with Mary, I knew that I would be welcomed and provided for during my stay at WATER. My housing arrangements came from a list of suggestions provided by former WATER intern Lauren Dunn; and I was met

resources here that fill a need in their own lives.

The safe space that WATER provides has helped me to build confidence in my own abilities. As a result of discussions at WATER, I have come to think of many of the scholars who have come before me not as inaccessible but as equal partners in the struggle for justice. The projects I have taken on have also challenged me to push past my own limitations. In designing several brochures for WATER's fundraising programs, I have learned how to use Microsoft Publisher, a skill that will serve me well in the future. While working on funding projects, I've seen how WATER incorporates feminist ideas in even the smallest details of day-to-day tasks. I've begun to do the same in my own work.

WATER has also been a place for me to learn about the many struggles facing the wider feminist community. Our meetings with women from local congregations have both



(l. to r.) Rachel, Katey, Gretchen, Sophie; Photo 2. meeting Kathleen Kennedy Townsend.

at the airport by fellow intern Sophie Kanter; Mary; and adorable daughter Min, who wanted nothing more than to help me carry my luggage.

This sort of hospitality was a central feature of my internship at WATER. We welcomed groups from various denominations to our office for conversation, and we visited organizations in the area to discover other ways justice-seeking women and men are at work in the Washington, DC area. As I arranged photographs of WATER's activities in albums, I saw that this hospitality is what holds the WATER alliance together across years, national boundaries, and generations.

One of our ongoing projects at WATER has been cataloguing the Carol Murdock Scinto Resource Center in an online database. As I worked with the books, I discovered treasures I had never heard of before; I wish I could spend a few months here doing nothing but reading! WATER provides a place where all of these amazing works are gathered under one roof and made accessible to those who need them. Many of those whom we have welcomed to the office have found

inspired us with the progress that has been made and encouraged us to persevere with the work that remains to be done. We have shared weekly seminars on topics ranging from ecofeminism to feminist liturgy and from global feminism to heterosexism. Our conversations each day over lunch often help bring our thoughts back to these struggles, the reasons why WATER's role is so important.

Most of all, WATER has been a home. It has been an opportunity to work and share time with other women working for justice and to be renewed by the strength and support of the Alliance. I am sad to leave, but I know that I go refreshed and ready to face new struggles. Thank you, WATER.

From Katey Zeh: As I finished a challenging first year at Yale Divinity School, I spoke excitedly with my friends about my upcoming internship at WATER, although I admitted readily that I could not articulate what that would entail. When I first considered an internship at WATER, I was drawn to its focus on issues concerning women and religion. I

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Collaborating for Change

WATER and the Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion, Inc. sponsored, and the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion in Crawfordsville, Indiana, hosted, an exciting five-day meeting of twenty-two women from various feminist organizations working on religion, education, and social change. Groups including the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance; the Boarding School Healing Project; FaithTrust Institute; Women's Theological Center; the Pacific, Asian, and North American Asian Women In Theology and Ministry (PANAATM), among others sent representatives who shared information on their work, highlighting organizational and theoretical/analytic needs for our common movement.

A full report will follow in the next *WATERwheel* as new forms of collaboration take hold as a result of the gathering. Executive summary: the movement is in good hands, it needs more resources both human and financial, and the possibilities for collaborating among us are strong, realistic, and necessary.

**Women-Church Convergence
25th Anniversary Celebration:
Celebrating Catholic Feminist
Ministries: A Women-Church Forum
August 17-19, 2007
Hyatt Regency O'Hare
Chicago, IL**

On the eve of our 25th Anniversary, Women-Church is gathering to celebrate our unique contribution: Feminist Ministries. With input from influential women like Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Mary Hunt, Patricia Fresen, Bridget Mary Meehan, and more, together we will explore the diversity of what feminist ministry is, what diverse forms it takes, and how we live out its call to empowerment in our lives.

The weekend-long forum is an interactive, celebratory gathering sponsored by the Women-Church Convergence, a coalition of more than 30 Catholic-rooted feminist groups. Women of all faith traditions are welcomed to an inclusive, joyful celebration as together we will look at what has changed, what has been accomplished, and what forms of feminist spirituality and ministry will lead us into the future.

The weekend will include panel discussions, topical working groups, feminist liturgies, and a Eucharistic banquet on Saturday night. For further information, please email us at: wccconference2007@women-churchconvergence.org

Women with breast cancer have contacted WATER to ask for blessings and liturgies to aid them on their cancer journeys. In response to their calls, we are creating a series of liturgies and rituals, blessings and prayers designed to mark some of the common experiences of women with cancer. This October, Breast Cancer month, share these prayers with those who need them.



Prayer To Begin and End Each Day

May all be loved.
May all be healed.
May all be sheltered.
May all be free from fear.

May I be loved.
May I be healed.
May I be sheltered.
May I be free from fear.



Blessing when the Chemotherapy Drug Flows

Blessed are You, Compassionate One,
For giving me these droplets of ____ (name
of chemotherapy drug).
Like refreshing dew and healing rain,
may they save my life.



Bless Me with New Space

I need to create new physical, intellectual,
and spiritual space to help me live with cancer.

Bless Yourself

The Breath of Life! Breathe deeply, and
create new space inside yourself.

Bless the Season

"For every thing there is a season, and a
time for every matter under heaven."
(Ecclesiastes 3:1)

Bless Water (Hold a water basin with herbs.)

The Water of Life! I bless this water as a sign
of life and renewal flowing into me.

Bless Light (Light a candle.)

The Light of Vision and Wisdom! I bless this
light as a sign of the Holy One who calls me
into new space.

Bless Physical Space (Open a door.)

The Door of Hospitality! I bless this door that
I may walk through it with courage. (Sprinkle it
with water.)

Bless Intellectual Space

The Wonder of the Mind! I bless my mind
that I may think clearly about my choices.
(Sprinkle water.)

Bless Spiritual Space

The Grace of Creativity and Healing! I bless
my heart and soul so that prayer, good works,
and friendship with Divine Wisdom may bring
me peace and healing. (Sprinkle water.)

Bless New Space

May the Holy One bless my new space!
May the God of Healing bless those who
need new space because of cancer!
May Divine Wisdom bless researchers with
new space to find a cure for cancer.



A Cup of Blessing

Fill your favorite cup with a drink you enjoy:
water, tea, cappuccino, wine, juice, coffee,
broth, or another beverage. Invite a friend or
several to join you, if you wish. Sit in silence,
or play music.

Centering

This is the season of endings and beginnings.
*Spirit of Blessing, surround me
as I pause and give thanks.*

Story of Three Cups

Once upon a time there were three cups. The
first was empty, waiting, ready to receive and
hold whatever was poured into it. The second
was filling with possibilities, pleasing the
senses with anticipation. The third brimmed to
overflowing, inviting the thirsty to receive its
powers.

Look at your empty cup:

My cup, empty now, will soon be filled with
drink.

*Blessed are You, Holy Vessel,
for the potential you offer.*

Fill your cup slowly with a drink of choice:
In filling this cup I see the possibilities of the
universe pouring forth through me.

*Blessed are You, Source of Life,
for filling my cup again.*

Hold your brimming cup:

This brimming cup is full of refreshment and
renewing powers.

*Blessed are You, Sacred Well,
for connecting me with new ways,
new words, new feelings.*

Begin to drink:

With this first sip, I give thanks for my life.
(Pause)

With this second sip, I visualize my cells being
cleansed of cancer. (Pause)

With this third sip, I hope for a cancer free
future. (Pause)

Seasons of Blessings and Prayers By Diana

Reflection

Think of your cup of blessing for this new time.
Notice the beauty emanating from your cup—
an empty space, a place for mystery, a possi-
bility waiting to be filled, a hunger yearning to
be satisfied, a brimming cup ready to share.

What do you need in your cup? What do you
accept from your cup? What will you give from
your cup?

Take time now to meditate, write in a journal,
converse, draw, dance, or do something else
that communicates your insight.

Closing

This is the season of endings and beginnings.
*Spirit of Blessing, surround me
as I pause and give thanks.*



Rest at the Reflecting Pool

Pick your favorite bowl, put it in a special
place, and fill it with water. Use rose water,
ocean water, spring water, or tap water with
desired additives: salt, herbs, a few drops of
oil, a flower, or coloring for a seasonal theme.
Choose a quiet time of day, perhaps before
or after radiation or chemotherapy, to rest your
body in a comfortable place and relax.

Centering

Look into the water.

Come, rest at the reflecting pool.
*Blessed are you, Holy Wisdom;
Bring healing to my body.
Blessed are you, Well of Stillness;
Surround me with your presence.*

Blessing

Dip your hands into the water.
Touch your forehead saying,
Bless me, Holy Wisdom, bring me healing.
Touch your heart saying,
Bless my heart and heal my loving.
Touch your eyes saying,
Bless my eyes and heal my seeing.
Touch your ears saying,
Bless my ears and heal my hearing.
Touch your mouth saying,

f Survival: for Women with Cancer n L. Neu

Bless my mouth and heal my speaking.
Touch your breasts (or where your breasts
used to be) saying,
Bless my breasts and heal my nurturing.
Touch your womb (or where your womb used
to be) saying,
Bless my womb and heal my creating.
Touch your hands saying,
Bless my hands and heal my touching.
Touch your feet saying,
Bless my feet and heal my walking.
Take a deep breath and exhale saying,
Bless me, Holy Wisdom, bring me healing.

Reflection

Pause for as long as you desire. Take time to meditate, write in a journal, draw, dance, or do something else if you wish.

Closing

Look into the water. Go forth, refreshed, from the reflecting pool.
*Blessed are you, Holy Wisdom,
for bringing healing to my body.
Blessed are you, Well of Stillness,
for surrounding me with your presence.*



Bless Me with Creative Hope

Many are weary from walking the cancer journey. They yearn for signs of creative hope.

This ritual invites you to think hopefully about the future and make your vision concrete.

Light a Candle, Center Yourself, Pray

God of Many Names,
Yahweh, Allah, Holy One, Wisdom-Sophia,
Bless me with creative hope for my weary journey.
Bless people in every nation with a cure for cancer.

Reflect on Hope

"Hope is a song in a weary throat."
—Pauli Murray, title poem, *Dark Testament* (1970)

"Hope is a very unruly emotion."
—Gloria Steinem, *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions* (1983)

"Hope is the thing with feathers—
That perches in the soul—
And sings the tune without the words—
And never stops at all."
—Emily Dickinson (1861), in T.W. Higginson and Mabel Loomis Todd, eds., *Poems by Emily Dickinson*, (1891)

Meditate / Journal

What are my sources of hope? What are my hopes for the future? What action will I take to bring creative hope to my weary journey?

Pray

God of Many Names,
Yahweh, Allah, Holy One, Wisdom-Sophia,
Thank you for your promise of hope.
Empower me to stay in this struggle;
Inspire me to be at peace. Amen.



Lighting An Anniversary

Marking an anniversary helps to see where we have been and where we are going. Pick such a day in your cancer journey. This ritual is for the beginning of an anniversary meal or special time of sharing. Place a cloth on the dining table. Center three candles on it, one for the past, a second for the future, and a third for the present. Use a cloth and candleholders that are family heirlooms, gifts, those from other cultures, handmade ones, special.

Candle Lighting

Many special times are ushered in with the kindling of lights. As we light these candles, I ask you to remember with me my journey with

cancer. Today we light three candles, one for the past, a second for the future, a third for the present.

The eldest says:

We kindle our first candle with thanks for the past year. In this lighting may we remember those who have walked with you this last year. (*The eldest lights one candle*) Think of and name one thing about the past year for which you are grateful. (*Sharing*)

The youngest says:

We light our second candle with hope for the future. In this lighting may we remember our wings and dream anew. (*The youngest lights the second candle.*) Think of and name aloud a wish you have for the coming year. (*Sharing*)

The hostess / host says:

We light the third candle to insure that these lights remain part of our journey long after the candles burn away. Let us share light with one another. Pass the candle, saying, "This is the light of healing."

Prayer

Gracious and Loving Holy One, Light of the World, You gather us around our table to kindle these anniversary lights. We give thanks for N. We pray for a cure for cancer so that all may be healed. Open our eyes to wonder, fill our hearts with joy, so we may give thanks for life and for one another. Amen.

Song: "This Little Light of Mine," Traditional
This little light of mine,
I'm gonna let it shine. (3x)
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Diann L. Neu, D.Min., LGSW, is cofounder and codirector of WATER.

Order Form for "Seasons of Survival" Prayer Cards for Women with Cancer

These prayers and others are now available as a packet of pocket prayer cards.

Send me ___ (no.) packets of "Seasons of Survival" Prayer Cards @ \$10 each + \$2 s&h. Make check payable to WATER.

Name _____
Address _____
City, State, Zip _____
Phone _____
Email _____

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Our Summer...

(Continued from page 5)

still admire that commitment, but I treasure even more greatly its emphasis on forming and maintaining community. It is the organic and interconnected nature of this organization that I find most rejuvenating.

Mary and Diann have been deeply committed to all of the interns this summer, wanting each of us to gain from the summer what we desired and needed. Unlike other internships in which I felt like a mere extra set of hands, this experience at WATER has granted me the space and freedom to explore and to grow, particularly as I struggle to discern my vocation. As a woman considering ordination in the United Methodist Church, an important part of my summer has been engaging in conversation with clergywomen. WATER has served as a rich resource in terms of finding opportunities to dialogue with women who are involved in various forms of ministry.

My time at WATER has reassured me that while there is still much work to be done with regard to women's issues in religion, commu-

This interaction began my experience with WATER—a completely eye-opening experience. I am not only amazed at how many feminist and religious resources exist in the world, but also how many connections there seem to be among the people in those fields. For instance, on my first day on the job, I looked on in awe while Mary speed-dialed the great theologian Mary Daly on her cell phone. In addition, she contacted Judith Plaskow and told her to email me directly. As a student, I had read the books and studied the theories of these theologians; at WATER, I had the opportunity to encounter them up close and personal!

My time at WATER allowed me to attend a conference hosted by the Spiritual Youth for Reproductive Freedom, the student arm of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. I participated in a three-day event in which we discussed religion and choice, listened to many great speakers on the subject, and lobbied on Capitol Hill. I had so much fun at the conference, and I hope to attend many

not in literature, but in religion.

My connections to WATER were made through connections to another network of religious progressives, an academic program known as the Oregon Extension. While I was out in Oregon for a month-long intensive course in women's studies, one of my TA's was a Mennonite social work student and seminarian, Lora Nafziger. During the course of that month, Lora spoke of her time at an internship where she was able to engage with feminist studies and religion, especially as they related to her interests in liturgy. Although she did not mention the name specifically, I filed her words away in my head as something that might interest me later. Imagine my surprise when, while searching for an internship earlier this year, I found Lora's name listed on WATER'S web site! I was immediately intrigued, and so I got in touch with both Lora and Mary Hunt about the possibility of an internship.

My WATER internship has, first of all, been everything I hoped for, especially as a



(l. to r.) A glimpse of "Intergenerational Conversations": Gretchen talks with Jane Pennington; Margee Iddings and Katey share stories; Rachel chats with Jeanne McKenzie; Carol Scinto and Sophie get acquainted.

nity is the essential element for change. As I return to Yale this fall, I serve as the new coordinator for the Divinity School Women's Center. I know that I will draw upon my experiences at WATER to enrich the work that I do.

From Sophie Kanter: As a college student nearing the end of my sophomore year at Guilford College in North Carolina, I was desperate for a summer job. And so, using both my mother's advice and my own good sense, I asked everyone I knew if they had any connections. In the process, I happened to ask my religion professor, Jane Redmont, a long-time friend of WATER, with whom I had just completed a semester-long course, "Religion, Ecofeminism and Environmental Justice." She told me of two lovely women running a great organization focused on women and religion. "But," she added, "they are located in Silver Spring, Maryland." I almost jumped out of my chair as I responded, "That's where I live!"

more such events in the future.

My time at WATER not only began with discovering existing connections, but also ends with the discovery and development of such associations. I have been able to meet and speak with people from all sorts of interesting organizations, which I would not have known about otherwise. Mary and Diann keep telling me, "Once you're in the Alliance, you'll never leave!" They may only be joking, but every day I feel that it is more and more true.

From Rachel Ingraham: I came to WATER in the midst of a year of change. Although I began my undergraduate career at Houghton College with plans to spend the rest of my years either studying or writing literature, my time and coursework at that tiny, Wesleyan-affiliated school opened my eyes to the ways in which Christianity can both oppress and be a liberating force in the lives of women. This recognition led me to apply to graduate school

transition between my time at a theologically and socially conservative place like Houghton, and a school like Harvard Divinity School. I benefited greatly from meetings with women and men from Presbyterian, Mennonite, Methodist, Unitarian, Jewish, Catholic, and other faith backgrounds. I enjoyed conversing with Mary, Diann, and the other interns during our weekly seminars on topics such as ecofeminism and embodiment. Unexpectedly, another perk of this internship has been living with Katey Zeh, an intern from Yale Divinity School. Living in the house of a WATER friend who does not own a TV, we were able to spend a great deal of time talking about our previous and present experiences, as well as our hopes for the future.

In my opinion, it is these sorts of conversations and connections that have made my time at WATER so valuable.

Resources

Althaus-Reid, Marcella. *FROM FEMINIST THEOLOGY TO INDECENT THEOLOGY*. London: SCM Press, 2004 (186 pages, \$26.99).

A provocative overview of the author's journey through, around, and with feminist theology and cognate disciplines.

An, Choi Hee. *KOREAN WOMEN AND GOD: EXPERIENCING GOD IN A MULTI-RELIGIOUS COLONIAL CONTEXT*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005 (190 pages, \$20).

This welcome contribution from a feminist colleague at Boston University, director of the Anna Howard Shaw Center, brings life story and analysis together in a unique mix. Korean women's naming of the divine is an important way in which they resist patriarchy and recreate their own lives.

Fortune, Marie M. *SEXUAL VIOLENCE: THE SIN REVISITED*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2005 (280 pages, \$24).

The need to reissue this classic (the original came out in 1983) is lamentable. But because sexual violence is still with us, perhaps more virulent than ever, Marie Fortune's revised and updated version is important, compelling reading.

Gobodo-Madikizela, Pumla. *A HUMAN BEING DIED THAT NIGHT*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2003 (193 pages, \$13).

The author is a Black South African psychologist who meets with and forgives Eugene de Kock, one of apartheid's chief agents. This study in forgiveness needs to be taught in every theological school. She argues we ought to grant mercy selectively, but indeed grant it on occasion. A powerful read. A touching tale. A challenge.

Good, Deirdre, Editor. *MARIAM, THE MAGDALEN, AND THE MOTHER*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005 (240 pages, \$22.95).

The *Da Vinci Code* may have

given Mary Magdalene public attention, but essays of the quality found here give readers a thorough grounding in the historical, biblical and artistic matters at hand.

Hunt, Helen LaKelly. *FAITH AND FEMINISM: A HOLY ALLIANCE*. New York: Atria Books, 2004 (208 pages, \$14).

Helen Hunt focuses on five women of spirit (Emily Dickinson, Teresa of Avila, Sojourner Truth, Lucretia Mott and Dorothy Day) to illustrate the connections between faith and feminism. She weaves in her own story as a feminist of faith and a philanthropist who understands the crucial role of religion in social change.

Kwok, Pui-lan. *POSTCOLONIAL IMAGINATION AND FEMINIST THEOLOGY*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005 (252 pages, \$24.95).

In this major contribution to feminist and postcolonial studies, Kwok Pui-lan lays a foundation for building a new approach. Her biblical, historical, systematic and ethical reflections add up to a new methodological basis for exploring religious concepts. Readers are in her debt.

Mitchell, Ella Pearson and Jacqueline B. Glass, Editors. *THOSE PREACHING WOMEN (VOLUME 4)*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2004 (126 pages, \$14).

The history and artistry of African American women's preaching is captured in this series. Read it for examples of creative, well-researched sermons that jump off the page as they must surely flow from the pulpit to open ears.

Reed, Betsy, Editor. *NOTHING SACRED: WOMEN RESPOND TO RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM AND TERROR*. New York: Thunder Mouth's Press/Nation Books, 2002 (426 pages, \$17.95).

These well-reasoned essays help to clarify why fundamentalism is religion's universal enemy. Scholar activists including Arundhati Roy, Charlotte Bunch, Leila Ahmed, and Syla Benhabib make one wish such material were more widely disseminated.

Ress, Mary Judith, Editor. *CIRCLING IN, CIRCLING OUT*. Santiago, Chile: Sociedad Con-spirando Collective, 2006 (215 pages, \$33).

This anthology of work published by colleagues of the well-known journal *Con-spirando* in Santiago, Chile, makes these creative, spirited women's wisdom accessible to an English-speaking audience. Their focus on experience as the basis of ecofeminist theologies and spiritualities keeps the work grounded in the really real.

Ruether, Rosemary Radford. *GODDESS AND THE DIVINE FEMININE: A WESTERN RELIGIOUS HISTORY*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005 (381 pages, \$27.50).

The move from god to goddess is not as simple as some would like. Rosemary Radford Ruether points out in perhaps her most challenging book to date that goddesses and matriarchies are a nice idea but the academic subtleties do not lend themselves to such easy conclusions. In fact, men constructed a lot of these images for their own purposes so the need for women to think critically and construct with suspicion remains.

Swedish, Margaret and Marie Dennis. *LIKE GRAINS OF WHEAT: A SPIRITUALITY OF SOLIDARITY*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004 (213 pages, \$18).

Two stalwart justice workers collaborate to bring forth the stories of those who suffer in Central America in order to document the imperative of solidarity. This is a

trust-worthy analysis, one that will embolden many to find their own ways to "create a new history."

Yeakel, Judy. *SISTER, TELL US YOUR STORY*. Langley, WA: Judy Yeakel, P.O. Box 579, Langley, WA 98260 (72 pages, \$9+\$1.75 s+h).

Simple, crisp, clear, short stories of women in the Bible are told with finesse. Ideal for retreat or prayer, for sermon ideas and an artful read.

For Young People

Spinelli, Eileen. *SOMETHING TO TELL THE GRANDCOWS*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2004 (32 pages, \$16).

Off she went with Admiral Byrd to the South Pole, our heroine Emmadine. And back she came to tell the grands of her glorious adventures. What a cow!

Swartz, Nancy Sohn. *HOW DID THE ANIMALS HELP GOD?* Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths Publishing, 2004 (20 pages, \$7.99).

Each animal in this delightful tale gives God a little advice. Taken together, they make a wonderful world.

Films

"I Was A Teenage Feminist." Written and directed by Therese Shechter, 62 minutes, Color, 2005. Available in various formats for screening and purchase. Contact: sales@trixiefilms.com; www.trixiefilms.com/teenfem/.

Young people view the "f word" variously and make their own decisions on whether and how to embrace it. This engaging film captures those dynamics and raises questions of its own about what feminism can and should mean today.



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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 theological, ethical, and liturgical development for and by women. We work locally, nationally, and internationally doing programs and projects, publications and workshops, counseling, spiritual direction, and liturgical planning which help people actualize feminist religious values and bring about social change. If you would like to subscribe for updates from the office and occasional news from colleagues in the field, send a message to majordomo@hers.com with the words "subscribe water-f" (that's water-hyphen-letter "f", NOT number 1) in the body of the message.

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"Brigid's Table Grace"
from St. Brigid's Monastery, Kildare

I should like a great lake of finest ale
for all the people.
I should like a table of the choicest foods
for the family of heaven.
Let the ale be made from the fruits of faith,
and the food be for giving love.
I should welcome the poor to my feast,
for they are God's children.
I should welcome the sick to my feast
for they are God's joy.
Let the poor sit with Sophia at the highest place
and the sick dance with the angels.
Bless the poor, bless the sick,
bless our human race.
Bless our food, bless our drink, all homes,
O God embrace.

WATER wishes you and yours Shared Abundance.