



waterwheel

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

Feminist Leadership on the Rise!

By Mary E. Hunt

Nancy Pelosi elected to be the first female Speaker of the House of Representatives, Katharine Jefferts Schori selected to be the first woman Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in the U.S.A., and Drew Gilpin Faust named the first woman president of Harvard University in its 371 short years prompt me to reflect on what difference, if any, women's leadership makes.

There ought to be a certain collective embarrassment among us a) that it has taken this long for women to achieve such status, b) that most of the firsts are still by white heterosexual women, and c) that their leadership is still viewed suspiciously by those who in their heart of hearts do not yet believe that women can handle the big time. But my concerns are different. I want to explore feminist leadership using the lens of religion and invite widespread discussion about how it might unfold.

I am persuaded that women are more than capable of these and any other jobs we take on. The frank fact is that, even in places where women have been discriminated against in top jobs they have been doing,

in positions heretofore reserved for men is a step forward. This is evident in religious circles where women pastors, rabbis, bishops, and the like have done marvelous work. But few of them would argue that their presence has changed the *structures* of their hierarchal religious traditions. In many instances, it has made it harder to argue for change because, after all, women are now in charge and aren't they doing a fine job! There is something fundamentally unfair about expecting more from women. After all, shouldn't we have the chance to make the same mistakes as men? But I want something *different* because we all learn from history, and men can be feminist leaders too.

Feminist leadership, as we have seen in some religious circles, involves changing the power dynamics so that decision-making and responsibilities are shared as broadly as possible. This does not mean that women give up power just when we get it. Nor does it mean that those who develop expertise, take risks, dare to move outside the box should not be recognized for the leaders they are. Rather, it means that we do not simply jump

What makes leadership "feminist" is not the gender of the leader...

much of the behind-the-scenes work has made many a male job holder look good. I have seen this over and over in theological education, for example, where male heads of institutions are backed up by women who do everything from keeping their calendars to writing grant proposals. Only custom and prejudice prevented some of those same women from being recognized for their leadership with the titles, salaries, and decision-making they merited. Unfortunately, this era is not yet behind us, and feminist leadership is still ahead.

What makes leadership "feminist" is not the gender of the leader, though having women

into power suits and carry on business as usual and call it feminist. Many examples prove that doing so results in more of the same, namely, top down leadership that disempowers people and, in the case of women, often ends up with a sexist backlash. Ask some of the first women to run corporations, for example dioceses, who, despite their positions, found it hard going.

Leadership is tricky business. While men tend to pick on the weak among them, women tend to go after the strong. So exerting leadership as a woman is fraught and vexed in many ways. Sexist conditioning

(Continued on page 2)



Three WATER interns meet: (l. to r.) Gretchen Zelle, 2006; Shelley Seyler, 2006-7; Monica Maher, first WATER intern, 1984.

Interns Welcome at WATER for Summer 2007

WATER welcomes applications for internships for the Summer of 2007. Please see our Web site, www.hers.com/water for more details and application forms. Gather your references, write your statement, and apply!

Last summer four wonderful women joined us to learn how to run a small feminist non-profit, meet with people from a range of religious traditions, help get our library on-line, do staff work for a conference, hone their fundraising skills, introduce older staff to the finer points of iPods and Facebook, and become part of the feminist liberation theological community worldwide.

Typical interns are college or graduate students with commitments to women's well being, interest in feminist theology, ethics and/or ritual, and a willingness to work hard and enjoy the opportunities of being part of a growing women's alliance.

We invite interns to stay a minimum of six weeks between May 21 and August 2, 2007. There is also a chance to collaborate with the Harvard Pluralism Project through a newly forming linkage of interns.

Tell your friends, students, colleagues, daughters about this exciting opportunity.



Editorial

The late Texas journalist Molly Ivins focused her last column, "Stand Up Against the Surge," on the war in Iraq (January 11, 2007, Creators Syndicate). A witty social critic whose zingy lines cut to the chase, she wrote, "We are the people who run this country. We are the deciders. And every single day, every single one of us needs to step outside and take some action to help stop this war. Raise hell. Think of something to make the ridiculous look ridiculous. Make our troops know we're for them and trying to get them out of there. Hit the streets to protest Bush's proposed surge. If you can, go to the peace march in Washington on Jan. 27. We need people in the streets, banging pots and pans and demanding, 'Stop it, now!'"

She died a few days after that event that brought thousands to the capital to rally, march, and lobby against a war that never should have started. At this writing it seems to have had little impact on Congress.

Molly Ivins called for an "old fashioned newspaper crusade to stop the war." It is not just to honor her memory but to save lives that we join our voices with hers in a resounding chorus to end this disaster. WATER is an international Alliance, but its location in the U.S., and especially in the Washington, DC area, makes such a strong and unapologetic stand ever more necessary.

We join Code Pink and other women's and peace groups in insisting that the killing stop now, not in a year, or when the next war begins in Iran. Political solutions look iffy, but military ones will not work. The Iraqi people and the international troops on the ground deserve better. Pass the pots and pans.



Pass It On

If you know someone (or have a list of friends and relatives) with whom you'd like to share this issue, send us name and address and we'll mail a complimentary copy direct. For anyone who would like to receive **WATERwheel** on tape, we can arrange for audio transcription of the desired issue(s) with Volunteers for the Visually Handicapped at \$10 per tape. Contact WATER, 301-589-2509.

Feminist leadership promotes sexual and racial inclusivity, age diversity, socially responsible banking and investing, recycling and other earth-friendly ways of operating, and human-scale worker/management arrangements with equitable sharing of the resources.

Feminist Leadersip...

(Continued from page 1)

makes it hard for some people, including many women, to take women seriously when they are in well earned positions of authority. Self doubt and lack of self confidence can keep some women from fulfilling their potential for fear they will fail. This is hard to overcome as it is still so efficiently drummed into women. I am discovering that even some young women raised on the "free to be you and me" approach are experiencing deep disillusionment when they realize there are still barriers, that racial, sexual, and other forms of discrimination, while perhaps more subtle, are no less operative.

Three dimensions of feminist leadership appeal to me. I wonder which ones you might add/subtract. The first is the insistence on a team approach. The "I am the decider" approach to leadership has long outlived its usefulness. "Together we are a genius," as the Grail has long maintained, is a much more realistic model. Sharing responsibility and playing off one another's strong suits can result in far more effective and efficient governance of most groups. The shared pastorate, the leadership team, the small group that acts as a steering committee, team teaching, co-editing are all ways that feminists have found to leave the Lone Ranger model aside, with wonderful results.

You need the right team members, and people need to pull their weight, not rely on a few to do all of the work. For example, some Catholic women's religious communities have found that a team approach to what used to be the job of "Mother Superior" is a more mature, sensible way of operating. Unfortunately, patriarchal power structures never cooperate with such innovation—they want one person named to a top position, one name on the form when three are doing the work. It will be some time before they catch up with creative feminists, but that ought not stop progress.

A second aspect of feminist leadership is respectful, just relating. It is hard to admit, but some of the most powerful women are not very nice people. Polls of members of Congress, for example, often rank certain

women leaders toward the bottom of the list when it comes to relating well with others, being respectful, and caring. I have seen this in my circles as well where some leaders of women's organizations, while enormously competent theoretically and technically, treat staff like serfs and routinely disrespect their subordinate colleagues. Such behavior is impossible to justify especially to idealistic employees who expect that people who do justice work will act justly.

I do not think it is too much to ask. Those who have power need to take it seriously and go the second mile to assure that we use it well. I know this up close from friends who run feminist organizations with such admirable style that they are the first to take a pay cut when things get rough, the first to send their staff a note of appreciation, the first to admit a mistake and fix it. Let's follow them.

A third dimension of feminist leadership is attention to new bottom lines. While it is hard to be a seminary president who can't meet the budget, or to run a synagogue without the backing of the congregation, I observe that a feminist approach invites new criteria for success. Perhaps what one is presiding over is not the biggest organization in the world, or the largest congregation, or the one with the fastest rate of growth. But feminist leadership promotes sexual and racial inclusivity, age diversity, socially responsible banking and investing, recycling and other earth-friendly ways of operating, and human-scale worker/management arrangements with equitable sharing of the resources. These bottom lines characterize today's successful organizations or we may not exist long enough to see tomorrow's.

It remains to be seen how feminist leadership will play out on a large scale since we know it, if at all, only in smaller settings. But teamwork, just relating, and new bottom lines will empower all of us well beyond the justifiable excitement of women moving into leadership positions for the first time.

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

Women Gather to Collaborate for Change

By Mary E. Hunt



Twenty-two leaders from women's organizations that deal with religion, feminism, and social justice spent five days last August, 2006, sharing ideas and challenges with an eye toward more systematic and regular work together. WATER and the Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion, Inc. convened, and the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Religion and Ministry in Crawfordsville, Indiana hosted, "Collaborating for Change." The Sister Fund provided a planning grant and WATER's summer interns had their own exercise in collaboration by doing the staff work that made this meeting such a positive experience. Thanks to all!

Representatives from diverse groups including the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance, the Women's Theological Center, the Women's Ordination Conference, *Bridges: A Jewish Feminist Journal*, the Gannon Center for Women and Leadership, the Community Education and Resource Development Network, the Pacific Asian and North American Asian Women in Religion, and others from a variety of religious and political starting points looked at programs, organizational structures, budgets, and staffing. We mapped out some of the contours of common needs: funding, media training, internships, teaching, and research, all components of a movement that we hope will continue to transform the religious landscape by amplifying women's voices raised in feminist commitments to justice.

The program was a rich mix of input from each organization with discussion in small groups to build a foundation among us for ongoing collaboration. For example, we learned from the FaithTrust Institute how it deals with federal money as a "faith-based initiative," and from the Foundation for the Advancement of Women in Religion how it is getting organized as a new resource to fund and promote women's work. We previewed videos produced by the Resource Center for Women in Ministry in the South on artist Meinrad Craighead and by the Boarding School Healing Project on sexual abuse.

Educators from Moving Traditions, the International Doctorate in Ministry Program

(at San Francisco Theological Seminary), the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, and Boston College, among others, shared their struggles to do feminist work in religious and theological education. WATER and JFSR, Inc. representatives shared their expertise in long years of non-profit management and critical feminist analysis. Getting a sense of the whole gave participants a realistic assessment of just how broadly based we are and how widespread our influence can be as we find ways to work together.

As is ever the case at women's meetings, what happened around the edges was as important as what happened in the plenary sessions. Several groups in the same field and two others located in the same city met for the first time. The lovely Wabash Center with its good food and drink was conducive of many informal conversations. Spirited times continued, even in the swimming pool!

Working together to share information on a new list serve and meeting informally at the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature annual gathering are but a beginning. Examples of next steps include several participants exchanging important insights on publishing. The idea for a consultation of "Women Activists in the Academy," which will take place in May 2007 in New York, organized mainly by colleagues at Yale, had its roots at this meeting. Many groups have voiced support for FaithTrust Institute as it has recently been defunded by the federal government.

WATER plans to deepen and expand this network. Next time a bigger table will be necessary to accommodate the growing number of groups involved in this work. Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh groups, for example, were not represented this time. We envision both 'how-to' sessions and information sharing, skill building as well as networking.

One of our collaborators, who was pregnant at the meeting, has since delivered her first child, a daughter. Hopefully when this girl child grows up her life will be more deeply connected with feminist justice-seekers from various traditions because of our gathering and the resultant collaborations.

Celebrating Catholic Feminist Ministries: A Women-Church Forum

August 17 -19, 2007 * Hyatt Regency O'Hare in Chicago

The member groups of Women-Church Convergence invite you to a weekend of sharing, worship, exploration, and festivity! On the eve of our 25th anniversary, Women-Church will gather to celebrate creatively various feminist ministries. We hope people of all faith-traditions will participate in this exciting gathering of women.

We envision the conference as a public forum where many women can share their struggles, insights, creativity, and hope for the future. In panel discussions, working groups, feminist liturgies, and a Eucharistic banquet on Saturday night we will reflect on our experiences, name critical issues, set priorities, discuss, strategize, organize, and dance. We hope you will join us.

Working Groups will explore:

- Community Building Ministries
- Ministries of Feminist Theology
- Political Ministries
- Spiritualities for Justice Ministries
- Gender and Anti-Racist Justice Ministries

We need your presence and voice to remember the past, to identify the struggles today, and to envision a more just future. Come experience the power of Divine Wisdom-Spirit in our midst!

www.women-churchconvergence.org
wccconference2007@yahoo.com
415.381.7144

Hotel information:

Hyatt Regency O'Hare
9300 West Bryn Mawr Ave.
Rosemont, IL 60018
888.421.1442 for reservations

Limited rooms at \$99. Reserve early.

Free shuttle from O'Hare



Spring arrives each year about March 21 or September 21, depending on your location. On this day both night and day are in complete balance. Light and dark are equal: twelve hours each. Spring officially begins, again. The Spirits of Renewal and Rebirth wake up. This is the day the ancient Chinese balanced eggs on end to welcome spring. This is the season of springtime meals: a picnic for the Spring Equinox, the Seder Meal of Passover, and the Eucharistic Meal of Easter. This is a time to bless symbols of renewal: air, water, fire, earth, and eggs.

Preparation

Invite people to a festive meal. Set an elegant table, or gather for a picnic. Place a bowl filled with water at an outside place (or gather around a fountain or pool). Create a ready-to-light bonfire site with extra sticks beside it. Have a candle and a hard-boiled egg for each participant. Prepare egg dyes and a place where participants will dye the eggs when they arrive.

AIR—Breath of Life

Welcome to our festive meal to celebrate the return of spring, the renewal of life. This eve, as the sun sets and the full moon rises, people in the northern hemisphere are honoring spring: the Spring Equinox on March 21, Passover on the 14th of the month of Nisan, and the Easter Vigil on the eve of the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring Equinox.

On this night, we celebrate the paradox that life comes from death, the phoenix rises from the ashes, strength grows out of oppression, and healing flows from pain. On this night, we commemorate that the Jewish people journeyed in Exodus from Egypt toward the Promised Land. On this night, we commemorate that Miriam's child, Sophia's prophet, Jesus, broke the chains of bondage and made liberation the heritage of Christians. On this night, we celebrate the renewal of spring and the return of air, earth, fire, and water.

Introductions

Let us share our names and say why we have come to this springtime meal. (Naming)

Story of Creation

Once upon a time, in the beginning, there was AIR. Breath. Breathing. Creation giving birth. And it was good.

Chant: The air, the earth, the fire, the water,
Returns, returns, returns, returns. (2x)

Question: Why do we remember women in

the stories of Passover, Easter, and spring tonight?

Response: The women were faithful. They believed, they acted, and they told the stories of liberation, especially the liberation of women and children.

Stories of Foremothers

(Three women play the parts of Miriam, Mary Magdalene, and Hildegard.)

Tonight we listen to the stories of three foremothers, Miriam, Mary Magdalene, and Hildegard of Bingen.

Miriam: I am Miriam, the older sister of Moses. I took a timbrel in my hand and danced the women into the Promised Land. My story has been lost or written out of history. It is not recorded in the Bible. Tonight, may we promise to dance our sisters and brothers and their children into the Promised Land.

Mary Magdalene: I am Mary of Magdala, a witness to Christ's resurrection and the foundation of women-church. I am the disciple to the disciples and yet I am rejected, forgotten, and proclaimed a whore in male written stories. I received the same promise as Peter. Tonight, may we believe in our promise as women and commit ourselves to telling our stories accurately.

Hildegard of Bingen: I am Hildegard of Bingen, 12th century composer, abbess, mystic, poet, and author of treatises on healing and natural history. My writings were well known during my lifetime; however, they gradually fell out of favor and were not accorded the importance that those of my male counterparts enjoyed. Tonight, may we pledge to continue our creative work and claim our visions, passions, and dreams to renew life.

First Toast

Let us offer the first toast tonight to our foremothers. Fill your glass and let us pray together. Please say after me:

Blessed are you, Source of Life, (Echo)
For you have given us women: (Echo)
Mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters, (Echo)
Children, grandchildren, nieces, cousins, (Echo)
Lovers, friends, colleagues, (Echo)
Who challenge us to renew the Earth. (Echo)
Blessed be our foremothers and all women. (Echo)

Chant: "O, Great Spirit"

O, Great Spirit, Earth, Air, Fire, and Sea:
You are around and all inside of me.

WATER—The Source of Life

Story of Creation

Once upon a time, in the beginning, there was WATER. Tears gushed forth. Rivers flowed. Rain fell. And it was good.

Chant: The air, the earth, the fire...

Question: Why do we bless with water tonight?

Response: Water is the source of life.

Healing the Waters

Some waters need healing. Call to mind the places on this Earth where the

A Spring The Rene By Dial

waters are polluted, troubled, or in drought. (Pause) Let us name them and respond. "May all waters be healed."

In poor countries hauling water is one of women's main daily occupations.

Response: May all waters be healed.

Many people in large cities worldwide do not drink water out of the faucets because the water is polluted. R:

In Bangladesh there is a new disaster: wells pump poison and people die from arsenic. R:

The Bagmati River in Kathmandu is characteristically dirty brown and full of particles that carry waterborne diseases. R:

Many urban areas in the United States are working to clean up their rivers: Atlanta's Chatahoochee, Cincinnati's Mill Creek, Denver's South Platte, Washington, DC's Anacostia. R:

In parts of rural India women walk many miles in search of water because the rivers are dammed to irrigate commodity crops like sugarcane. R:

Crossing the Andes, bus drivers routinely throw styrofoam trash into the rivers. R:

In many parts of Africa the rains fail and drought prevails. R:

Name other problems now and we will respond. R:

Prayer

Let us pray: Spirit of Renewal, breathe life into all waters. Waters, be made clean to praise our Creator and share your life-giving powers with all creation. Source of Life, Living Water, Restoring Creator Spirit, heal all waters. Amen. Blessed Be. Let It Be So.



Reading: "Water" by Paula Gunn Allen, from *The Sacred Hoop*, ©1986.

Water.

Lakes and rivers.

Oceans and streams.

Springs, pools and gullies.

Arroyos, creeks, watersheds.

Pacific. Atlantic. Mediterranean.

Indian. Caribbean. China Sea.

(Lying. Dreaming on shallow shores.)

Arctic. Antarctic. Baltic.

Mississippi. Amazon. Columbia. Nile.

Thames. Sacramento. Snake.

(Undulant woman river.)

Seine. Rio Grande. Willamette.

McKenzie. Ohio.

Time Meal: Renewal of Life

Diann L. Neu

Hudson. Po. Rhine. Rhone.
Rain. After a lifetime of drought.
That finally cleanses the air.
The soot from our eyes.
The dingy windows of our western home.
The rooftops and branches. The wings of birds.
The new light on a slant. Pouring.
Making everything new.

The Second Toast

Let us pour water into our glasses. Let us offer our second toast to Mother Earth, who renews herself each springtime. Raise your glass and say:

Blessed are you, Source of Life, Creator of the Universe, Holy Water, *(Echo)*

For you give all creation water that makes every thing new. *(Echo)*

Cleanse all waters. Multiply our water sources.

Bless the earth with water. *(Echo)*

Bless us with life-giving water. Restore all waters. Refresh the thirsty with safe water. *(Echo)*

Amen. Blessed Be. Let It Be So. *(Echo)*

Chant: "O, Great Spirit"

FIRE—Passion for Justice

Chant: The air, the earth, the fire, the water...

Story of Creation

Once upon a time, in the beginning, there was FIRE. Flames leapt. Sparks flew. Light came forth. And it was good. *(Someone lights the fire.)*

Question: Why do we bless fire tonight?

Response: Fire links us to all creation and to the hearths of all women.

Reading: Listen to the words of Elsa Gidlow, "Chains of Fire," *Elsa: I Come with My Songs, The Autobiography of Elsa Gidlow*,

©Bootlegger Publishing.

I know myself linked by chains of fires

To every woman who has kept a hearth.

In the resinous smoke

I smell hut, castle, cave,

Mansion and hovel,

See in the shifting flame my mother

And grandmothers all over the world.

Sharing the Fire

Take a candle. Let us light our candles, saying: "We are linked by chains of fire." *(The reader lights her candle, then lights the one next to her.)*

The Third Toast

Warm your hands by the fire.

Blessed are you, Flame of Justice, *(Echo)*

Spark of Truth, Source of Passion, *(Echo)*

Warm the hearths of women in war torn lands this evening. *(Echo)*

Chant: "O, Great Spirit"

EARTH—Food for the Journey

Chant: The air, the earth, the fire, the water...

Story of Creation

Once upon a time, in the beginning, there was EARTH. Rich soil. Fertile fields. Food for all creation. And it was good.

Question: Why do we eat this festive meal tonight?

Response: We eat this springtime meal because during this season people gather to celebrate the victory of life over death, of freedom over bondage, of liberation over oppression. We drink four glasses because they represent the four corners of the earth, for freedom must live everywhere; the four seasons of the year, for freedom's cycle must be forever; the four elements, for freedom's renewal must continue.

The Fourth Toast

Let us offer this fourth toast to peace in the world.

Blessed are you, Source of Life, *(Echo)*

For you give us peace. *(Echo)*

Blessing Salad

Hold up the salad. These greens celebrate the renewal of spring.

Blessed are you, Source of Life, *(Echo)*

For you call forth life from the earth each year. *(Echo)*

These greens of spring are signs of hope in our struggle for freedom. *(Echo)*

May they strengthen us to overcome oppression in all its forms. *(Echo)*

Blessing Bread

Hold up the bread. This bread is hope for those who are hungry.

Blessed are you, Source of Life, *(Echo)*

For you give us this bread of nourishment. *(Echo)*

It represents our bodies. *(Echo)*

May we keep our bodies healthy and beautiful. *(Echo)*

Blessing and Eating Food

(The cooks bring in the main course.)

Blessed are you, Source of Life, *(Echo)*

For you give us food for the journey. *(Echo)*

Let us eat this food remembering the promise of spring.

Chant: "O, Great Spirit"

EGGS—Renewal and Rebirth

Chant: The air, the earth, the fire, the water...

Question: Why do we share eggs tonight?

Response: The tradition of giving colored eggs dates back to early times. At the spring festivals of the ancient Persians, Greeks, and Chinese, eggs were exchanged as tokens of revival after a long, cold winter. Jews include a roasted egg on the Seder plate. To early Christians, eggs were symbols of the resurrected Christ. Decorated eggs kept sickness away. The egg, as it has for thousands of years, symbolizes renewal and rebirth.

Exchanging Eggs

Let us exchange eggs with one another and greet one another, saying "Happy Spring."

Closing

We now bring our springtime meal to a close. Next year, may the Earth and all religions be renewed once again. May wars cease. May peace come. May creation be renewed.

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

In Memory of Her

From *Mary Burke, Boston, MA*: In memory of **Elizabeth (Betty) Carroll, rsm**, a Sister of Mercy, a pioneer in women's struggles for equality, a missionary in Peru, a beloved friend, who spent most of her life empowering and advocating for women.

From *Marian Shatto, Lititz, PA*: In honor of the marriage of **The Rev. Nancy Steeves** and **Dawn Waring, Ph.D.** on 7/29/06 in Edmonton, Alberta.

From *Linda Thornton, Ficastle, VA*: In honor of **Katherine Fulton** and **Katharine Kunst**.

From *Regina Bannan, Philadelphia, PA*: In memory of three mothers who died in September, 2006 and in honor of three daughters: **Victoria R. Cronenberger**, mother of my cousin, **Barbara Cronenberger**; **Rose Bonavitacola**, mother of my colleague in SEPA WOC, **Maria Marlowe**; and **Joan Stehr Gavin**, mother of my friend from the College of St. Elizabeth, **Patricia Gavin McConville**.

From *Mary Mason, Round Hill, VA*: In honor of **Gwendolyn Spencer**, my beautiful sister, who died in Arizona at age 72.

From *Dottie Waltz, Forest Grove, OR*: In honor of **Winnie Beu**.

From *Margaret O'Herron, Schaumburg, IL*: In memory of **Dolores Brooks, OP**.

From *Bea Leising, osf, Buffalo, NY*: In honor of **Mary Leising**.

From *John Millen, San Francisco, CA*: To the honor of **Blessed Bride of Kildare**, a wonderful model for feminists of faith.

From *WATER*: In memory of the incomparable **Molly Ivins** whose insights and humor made her "must reading" for activists everywhere.



(l. to r.) Satoko Yamaguchi, Japan; Lieve Troch, The Netherlands; Mercy Oduyoye, Ghana; Mary E. Hunt and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, USA; Kath McPhillips, Gwen Benjamin, Coralie Ling, Australia; and Elaine Wainwright, New Zealand.

The Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network (FLTN), a longtime project of WATER, met in two configurations in November 2006. For the first time, a small group of women who represent networks of women in the field came to the WATER office from Australia, New Zealand, Ghana, Japan, the Netherlands, and the U.S. to discuss how their groups might work together. Some of the ideas that surfaced at our November meeting include thinking about:

- ~Support for women in graduate schools especially by serving as mentors and/or supervisors in feminist liberation theology for students whose institutions do not have feminists on the faculty;
- ~Courses on-line to make use of technology for feminist liberation theological work;
- ~Contact with and encouragement for the formation of networks of feminist liberation theology colleagues in other parts of the world.

The group decided to generate a list of the Web sites of networks of feminist organizations working on issues of women and religion around the world to be put up on WATER's site on the FLTN page. It will facilitate connections among us. With

Creating Networks of Networks

greater contact between/ among groups, we hope to increase discussion and action about issues that are of concern to feminist theologians around the globe. Please

send the names and Web site addresses of groups from your region and/or in your field that should be included to water@hers.com.

The regular meeting of the FLTN took place in Washington, DC in conjunction with the Annual Meetings of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature. More than sixty participants heard Catherine Pinkerton, CSJ, from NETWORK and Sandy Sorenson from the United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries describe their work as lobbyists who bring religious values to bear on their work. Productive discussion ensued with colleagues from around the world bringing their feminist liberation theological expertise to bear on current political issues, especially the war in Iraq and immigration.

The next regular meeting of the FLTN will be on Friday, 16 November 2007 in San Diego, California, in conjunction with the Annual Meetings of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature. We usually meet from 4-6 PM, but will confirm this when we are given our time slot and location by the AAR. Join us.

Order Liturgy Books from WATER

By Diann L. Neu



Seasons of Survival
Prayers for Women
with Cancer



Women's Rites:
Feminist Liturgies
for Life's Journey

Gathered At Sophia's Table
A Feminist Peace Seder
For Passover
and Holy Thursday



Return Blessings:
Ecofeminist Liturgies
Renewing the Earth



Peace Liturgies

Send me

- ___ (no.) Seasons of Survival Prayer Cards @ \$10 packet, 5 for \$45.
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Andrew, Elizabeth J. **WRITING THE SACRED JOURNEY: THE ART AND PRACTICE OF SPIRITUAL MEMOIR.** Boston: Skinner House Press, 2005 (244 pages, \$16).

Spiritual memoir is increasingly popular as a genre for expressing women's experiences. This how-to book is a good introduction to the practice, whether one is writing for publication or personal edification.

Berger, Teresa. **FRAGMENTS OF REAL PRESENCE: LITURGICAL TRADITIONS IN THE HANDS OF WOMEN.** New York: Herder & Herder, 2005 (262 pages, \$24.95).

Theresa Berger brings a feminist perspective to the forms and functions of liturgy with wonderful results. Yes, in women's hands everything from Eucharist to love-making can be sacramental. Read it to find out!

Bonavoglia, Angela. **GOOD CATHOLIC GIRLS: HOW WOMEN ARE LEADING THE FIGHT TO CHANGE THE CHURCH.** New York: Harper-Collins, 2005 (338 pages, \$25.95).

Angela Bonavoglia shows Catholic feminism for what it is—smart, fearless, faithful, and creative because so many women, many of whom she chronicles here, are just that! She profiles many of the players and shows how tragic it is that the institutional church loses such energy and talent. Thank heavens for Women-Church, where it is focused and utilized for the common good.

Boudin, Marie Evans. **SEEKING WHOLENESS: WOMEN DEALING WITH ABUSE OF POWER IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.** Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006 (130 pages, \$12.95).

An important contribution to the clergy sexual abuse situation. Marie combines case studies with critical feminist analysis to describe the reasons for clergy misconduct and suggest ways to overcome it. This should be on every seminary and parish's reading list.

Cherry, Kittredge. **JESUS IN LOVE.** Berkeley, CA: AndroGynePress, 2006 (324 pages, \$ 18.95).

Kittredge takes familiar biblical texts and infuses them with postmodern sexuality, giving new meaning to "the passion of Christ." This well written page turner is an oft-told story never told this way before.

Resources

Fry, Helen, Rachel Montagu, and Lynne Scholefield. **WOMEN'S VOICES: NEW PERSPECTIVES FOR THE CHRISTIAN-JEWISH DIALOGUE.** London: SCM Press, 2005 (241 pages, \$29.99).

A welcome collection that invites readers to their own dialogue. Intended for the non-specialist, this book includes useful references for further reading by some of the major players in the field.

Grey, Mary C. **SACRED LONGINGS: THE ECOLOGICAL SPIRIT AND GLOBAL CULTURE.** Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004 (260 pages, \$19).

A trusted scholar and activist, Mary Grey articulates a wonderful challenge for living in a globalized, commercialized culture where "desire" has been constructed as acquisition. She proposes ways to long for what is important—clean water, food, shelter, love, for all. A terrific read, a prophetic vision. A debt of gratitude owed.

Jensen, Jane Richardson and Patricia Harris-Watkins. **SHE WHO PRAYS: A WOMAN'S INTERFAITH PRAYER BOOK.** Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2005 (224 pages, \$21.95).

A rich mix of resources for personal and communal prayer, this collection draws with equal grace from scripture and goddess resources, from the Christian calendar and Native American practices. The juxtapositions can jar, and that feeling can itself be a spur to prayer.

Levine, Amy-Jill and Marianne Blickenstaff, Editors. **A FEMINIST COMPANION TO JOHN (VOLUMES I and II).** Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2003 (246 and 226 pages, \$21 each).

This commentary series is ever so helpful for new insights into this popular material. Feminist scholars Mona West (on Lazarus as a lesbian coming out story), Jane Schaberg (on Mary Magdalene, of course) and Satoko Yamaguchi (on "I Am" sayings) bring unique perspectives to the text.

Malone, Mary T. **WOMEN & CHRISTIANITY: FROM 1000 TO THE REFORMATION.** Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001 (298 pages, \$20). **WOMEN &**

CHRISTIANITY: FROM THE REFORMATION TO THE 21ST CENTURY. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003 (334 pages, \$20).

These two volumes complete a useful trilogy for an overview of women's role, both hidden and public, in Christianity. A good starting point for getting a feel for the trajectory.

Mercer, Joyce Ann. **WELCOMING CHILDREN: A PRACTICAL THEOLOGY OF CHILDHOOD.** St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2005 (292 pages, \$29.99).

It is challenging to figure out how to pass religious tradition and values to children. Joyce Mercer acknowledges the challenge and provides some insightful ways of beginning to grapple with them in a commercialized, Disney-ized culture. On we struggle, but hopefully having fun along the way.

Oduyoye, Mercy Amba. **BEADS AND STRANDS: REFLECTIONS OF AN AFRICAN WOMAN ON CHRISTIANITY IN AFRICA.** Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004 (114 pages, \$18).

A valuable overview of an important theologian's life and a clear setting out of her current position on a variety of issues both theological and social. Mercy Oduyoye is an ecumenical leader with a great deal to teach.

Ruether, Rosemary Radford. **INTEGRATING ECOFEMINISM, GLOBALIZATION, AND WORLD RELIGIONS.** New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005 (195 pages, \$19.95).

Rosemary Ruether takes religions seriously as resources for stemming the deadly tide of ecocide and globalization. In this important contribution to current feminist theological and spiritual efforts, she provides "green" insight and smart suggestions.

Smith Jr., Archie and Ursula Riedel-Pfaefflin. **SIBLINGS BY CHOICE: RACE, GENDER, AND VIOLENCE.** St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004 (181 pages, \$29.99).

Two very different people—an African American man and a white European woman—collaborate to prove that we can be "siblings by choice" in the divine equation. These two skilled pastoral theologians not only discuss the differences that divide and the ties

that can bind, but they offer exercises for readers to do the same.

Solberg, Randi O. **LET OUR VOICES BE HEARD!** Hamburg, Germany: Mein Buch, 2004 (541 pages, 30 Euros).

What a treasure; would that we had a book like it from every continent. This comprehensive, attractive volume stands as a testament to the creativity and generosity of European women who inspire others around the world to follow their courageous lead.

Williams, Demetrius K. **AN END TO THIS STRIFE: THE POLITICS OF GENDER IN AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCHES.** Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004 (224 pages, \$18).

Gender politics are by no means restricted to African American churches. But this straightforward telling of the story and equally forthright proposal of an alternative vision is a refreshing, welcome contribution to the discourse. Other religious groups should take a lesson.

For Young People

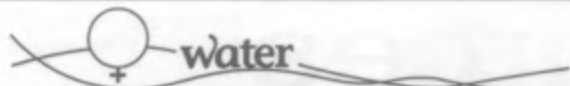
Schamburg, Tracy M. **CATIE THE CATERPILLAR: A STORY TO HELP BREAK THE SILENCE OF SEXUAL ABUSE.** Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 2006 (31 pages, \$6.95).

Other than masculine language for the divine, this is a lovely little story that encourages children to name and reject sexual abuse. They learn they will be loved and respected even if they tell the "secret" their perpetrator has instilled in them. Would that this book were not necessary, but because it is, get it and read it with children.

Film

"The Sermons of Sister Jane." A film by Irving Saraf, Allie Light, and Carol Monpere. New York: Women Make Movies, 2006, 53 minutes (www.wmm.com for ordering details).

Sister Jane Kelly tells it like it is. She is a feminist nun who affirms reproductive justice and same-sex love, condemns sexual abuse by priests, and lives the values of justice and equality. The film captures her spirit and spreads her convictions.



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The Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER) is a unique educational center in the Washington, DC area that focuses on feminist work in religion. Since our founding in 1983, WATER has built a growing network of colleagues around the world who bring feminist insights to religious practice in the service of social change. WATER has a national and international reputation for quality research, publication, conferences, and direct services related to feminist issues in religion. Through workshops, rituals, seminars, retreats, and classes designed to promote women as religious and moral agents, WATER staff help many women, men, and children actualize feminist religious values and bring about social change.

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I, the fiery life of divine essence, am aflame beyond the beauty of the meadows, I gleam in the waters, and I burn in the sun, moon, and stars...

I awaken everything to life.

~Hildegard of Bingen



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WATER wishes you and yours Renewed Life.