



**Top left:** Rebecca Parrish, director; Sr. Simone Campbell, executive director of NETWORK; Mary E. Hunt; Sr. Chris Schenk, former executive director of FutureChurch; Nicole Bernardi-Reis, producer; and Daniel Alpert, executive producer at WATER's party for the film "Radical Grace." **Top Right:** Carolivia Herron, Georgia Herron, and Sr. Hope Bauerlin at Hope's 90th birthday party at WATER. **Bottom Right:** Frank Malony and Carroll Saussy, WATERgems, celebrate at WATER. **Bottom Left:** Katherine Wojtan and Diann Neu of WATER visit at Mary's Pence.



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## Seismic Shifts, Religious Reflections

by Mary E. Hunt

I do not recall a time in the United States when the moral compass spun so wildly and landed each time on true north as surely as in late June 2015. Such opportunities do not appear often; this is one to grab with gusto. The backlash started immediately. But in the brief

It was edifying to hear their clear articulation of beliefs, morally startling to realize the depth of their conviction such that it surfaced spontaneously in their hour of deepest despair.

Whether one agreed with their instinct to forgive or not, the people of Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church took the moral bar up a large notch. Love trumps hate; love triumphs over death. Really? Really, at least in Charleston this time for the entire world to see.

Then the Supreme Court opined on Fair Housing, a ruling that gets at tricky questions. Discrimination may be unintended, but it can still be illegal. If actions cause discrimination, intent is not the issue, they ruled. Injustice is injustice. Subtle though this was, and hardly as anticipated or glitzy as other decisions this season, the Court helped people see that what happens to others is consequential no matter how it happens. There is an ethics lesson here that transcends religious traditions.

Health Care was next up with a decisive call by the justices to provide federal support even in states that do not have exchanges. Their reading was generous, as is the law, toward those whose resources cannot stretch to pay for health insurance. But that was the whole point of the Affordable Care Act, to make health care a right not a privilege. Other developed democracies do that routinely and have done so for decades. But for U.S. citizens to begin to internalize this right, and what it means to love the neighbor enough to share in the cost of keeping her/him alive and well, shows moral growth. *(continued on page 2)*



interval between rejoicing and rolling up sleeves to get at the next items on the justice agenda, I offer five observations that reflect the religious dynamics.

A racist terrorist murdered nine African American Christians engaged in Bible study in Charleston, South Carolina, and their families offered him their forgiveness. I trust even the most pious were taken aback by the strong show of faith by people who had every right to condemn.

## Become a WATERgem!

Join our monthly giving program and provide a steady stream of support for people who need WATER. The work required to bring about feminist religious social change depends on dedication and predicable, stable funding from people like you who want to make a difference in the world. Sign up to donate \$10, \$15, \$25, \$50, \$100 or more each month, bi-monthly or quarterly through our secure PayPal account or international electronic bank transfer. You will receive a monthly email update about the current work you empower. Visit the Donate page on WATER's website at [waterwomensalliance.org](http://waterwomensalliance.org) for more information or to sign up to donate today.



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## Who We Are

WATER is a a global network, an educational and spiritual space, a center for dialogue on feminism, faith, and justice. We connect activists, religious leaders, students, scholars, and allies who are using feminist religious values to create social change. WATER was founded in 1983 by Mary E. Hunt and Diann L. Neu and has been empowering women to address structural violence for more than thirty years — making WATER one of the oldest feminist religious non-profit organizations in the world. The WATER community needs you to work toward inclusive theologies and rituals, to push for social change, and to collaborate across many differences. Join us! **To learn more about what we do, visit [waterwomensalliance.org](http://waterwomensalliance.org).**

Mary E. Hunt Diann L. Neu | Co-directors

Cathy Jaskey Kate Stoltzfus | Staff Associates

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## WATER Joins Colleagues in Cuba

In May 2015, Mary E. Hunt joined more than 85 colleagues in Cuba for a conference on "Non-Heteronormative Genders and Sexuality: The Churches Deal With These Challenges." Academics, religious leaders, and LGBTIQ activists presented papers and engaged in spirited discussion. Speakers included the Rev. Troy Perry and the Rev. Mona West of the Metropolitan Community Churches and Mary, who offered a feminist theological reflection on the theme. The gathering was held at the Evangelical Seminary of Theology where WATER colleague Clara Luz Ajo is the vice rector. WATER looks forward to deepening ties with progressive religious communities in Cuba.







WATER Welcomes Summer 2015 Staff

WATER is delighted to welcome new colleagues for the summer. Mara Lemesany, who is soon to graduate from Tufts University, and Mary Grace Steigerwald, a junior at Southwestern University, are interning with WATER through July 2015. Rachel Bundang, a visiting scholar from Convent of the Sacred Heart in San Francisco, is writing new course material in the office during the month of July. Join us in welcoming these wonderful women to the community!

From left: Rachel Bundang; Mara Lemesany; 2014-15 staff associate Cathy Jaskey of Loretto Volunteer Program; Mary Grace Steigerwald; and 2014-15 staff associate Kate Stoltzfus of Mennonite Voluntary Service.

Seismic Shift *(continued from page 1)*

Then came the rainbow ruling, a hard fought but unmistakable acknowledgement that there is only one kind of marriage now.

People who love as same-sex couples are as entitled to marry as those whose love takes a heterosexual form. Suddenly, the White House was bathed in colors; major corporations heralded their support for “love means love,” and an infinite variety of people cheered the judicial confirmation of a long evolving social change. There was something breathtaking about it, especially given that certain religions, notoriously institutional Roman Catholicism, for example, have harmed so many people over love.

The ruling was a rebuke to that entire way of thinking even if it has no power to change religious practice. Discrimination in jobs, housing, and against trans people needs attention. This decision confirmed a sea change that cannot be turned back. There is Justice. And then, as if enough good things had not happened for those of us unaccustomed to seeing change we appreciate, President Barack Obama took to the pulpit to eulogize the Rev. Clementa Pinckney who was killed in the racist shooting at the Charleston church.

The President spoke words for the ages, a sermon that echoed around the world in its moral clarity, emotional quality, spiritual brilliance, and strategic importance. His resonant singing of “Amazing Grace” capped the address that sent civil justice work into high gear for the whole country, a common project too long postponed.

The events at the end of June did not admit of any single religious perspective. But one by one and in the aggregate they softened a coarse moral climate and soothed a divided country by lifting up our best instincts to the level of policy. Alleluia. ■

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

W-CC Gathers for Annual Meeting

by Mary E. Hunt and  
Cathy Jaskey

“Women-Church Convergence is a coalition of autonomous Catholic-rooted groups working to build social and ecclesial structures with

In order to do so, the Convergence set up monthly conference calls for education and strategizing. The groups planned a conversation as part of the upcoming Women’s Ordination Worldwide Conference in Philadelphia in September.



Members of the Women-Church Convergence got a sneak peek at the film “Radical Grace” during their annual gathering in May 2015.

shared power for everyone, especially women and those whom church and society marginalize.”

So begins Women-Church Convergence’s newly approved mission statement that the group crafted at its annual meeting in Cincinnati in May 2015. It goes on to say: “Our commitment to feminist ministries and our social justice values lead us to act boldly in the world for the benefit of all.”

At the meeting we experienced what we envision — cooperation, good fun, hard work, prayerful ritual, committed women.

The Convergence is engaged in creating new spaces and ways of being a justice-seeking force in society and a change-making force in church circles. It is exploring how to share resources and costs, how to empower members with technology, and how to expand staff to enlarge the group’s scope. The next meeting will be held in May 2016. ■

Upcoming Programs

Our series of **WATERtalks** features conversations with feminist activists and theologians for an open dialogue of ideas, research, and experiences. The 2015-2016 line-up promises a broad array of speakers for new learning: **Sandy Boucher** on September 9, **Kelly Brown Douglas** on November 11, **Beverly Lanzetta** on December 9, **Grace Kao** on January 13, **Joanna Brooks** on February 10, and **Joan Chittister** on June 8. All WATERtalks run from 1 to 2 p.m. ET on their selected dates.

**Catholic Lesbian/Queer Women’s Discussion** series will feature **Deb Myers** and **Nickie Valdez** on September 13 and **Michelle Scheidt** on November 15 at 11:30 a.m. ET.

WATER’s monthly **Contemplative Prayer/Meditation** session is a shared meditation and silence followed by discussion of the month’s topic. Scheduled dates for fall 2015 are September 14 with **Mary E. Hunt**, October 12 with **Judy Bond**, November 9 with **Janet Bohren**, and December 7 with **Kate Stoltzfus**, all at 7:30 p.m. ET.

RSVP is required for all events to join by phone or in person at the Silver Spring, MD office. Register for free upcoming talks on our website or email [waterstaff@hers.com](mailto:waterstaff@hers.com).

Be Creative, Make Change

The **Feminist Liberation Theologians’ Network Gathering** will be held at the American Academy of Religion Annual Meetings Friday November 20, 2015 in Atlanta, Georgia from 4 to 6 p.m. on feminist liberation theologies and the arts.

Presenters include:

**Katie Cannon, Union Presbyterian Seminary:** “Antecedents of Womanist Artistic Expressions”

**Cynthia Kittredge, Seminary of the Southwest:** “Poetry as Biblical Interpretation: A Lot of the Way the Trees Were Walking”

**Monica Maher, Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences in Ecuador:** “Feminist Liberation Theologies Within the Museums of Quito, Ecuador”

**Elizabeth Ursic, Mesa Community College:** “Making Things Rite: The Importance of Ritual in Feminist Liberation Theologies”

All are welcome. RSVP to Mary E. Hunt at 301-589-2509 or [mhunt@hers.com](mailto:mhunt@hers.com).

Summer Ritual: Harvest Blessing

by Diann L. Neu

The first harvest is celebrated in August (and in February in the Southern Hemisphere) when fruits and vegetables are plentiful. This is a time to honor what we have, especially abundance, just as generations before us did, and if we honor Earth, those after us will. Festivals of prosperity, farmers markets, and county fairs mark the wealth of Earth.

*Place symbols of the summer harvest — wheat, corn, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, peaches, basil, mint, other herbs, bread, and lemonade — in front of you or in the center of a circle.*

Reflective Action

Take a piece of basil or mint; rub it with your fingers and smell its wonderful scent.

Blessing the Summer Harvest

Blessed are you, Providence of the Cosmos, for the gifts of abundant summer gardens. Bless us with creative energy for justice. And bring us peace!

Blessing Bread

Blessed are you, Life-giving Bread, for the wheat that we reap to make new bread. Bless the fruits of our labors. And bring us peace!

Blessing Drink

Blessed are you, Joyful Holy Wisdom, for quenching our thirst to refresh us. Bless us with a firm and daring spirit. And bring us peace!

Take Action

- Buy fruits and vegetables from your neighborhood farmers market.
- Invite friends to share a picnic in a park.
- Plant an herb garden.
- Try to go vegan or eat less meat one day a week.
- Volunteer at a neighborhood shelter to share with people who are experiencing lack of stable food, housing, or finances.

© Diann L. Neu is co-founder and co-director of WATER. A full version of this ritual is available on our website.

