

water wheel

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

In Brief

Enough is too much. The war in the Gulf rages as we write. It may be over when we publish--miracles happen--but we urge an immediate end to conflict. Lives are lost, cities unto civilizations are ravaged by bombing by the United States and its allies, the eco-system will be decades in the regeneration. "Just war" has lost all meaning; what can possibly be "proportional" to chemical and nuclear weapons? Sophisticated weaponry that sometimes finds its targets and sometimes misses wreaks havoc in the name of oil, pseudo-democracy and a new world order that looks disconcertingly like the old world order with new players.

WATER joins countless organizations, religious and secular, in calling for an immediate end to the air and ground war, and negotiations in earnest including discussion of the Palestinian situation. We realize that everyone does not agree and that circumstances are complex, but loss of life when diplomacy and even sanctions remain to be tried, especially the loss of civilian lives, is beyond the ethical pale.

We work just a local phone call away from the White House "comments" line (202-456-1111). We go to vigils, teach-ins and protests; we hold liturgies, write articles and sponsor discussions. WATER hosted a local coalition meeting of women's groups against the war.

International friends call and write to say that they know we are doing what they would beg us to do. We know that you and you and you are doing the same. We only hope that it makes a difference. Hope is religion's mainstay.



Peace, Yesterday

by Mary E. Hunt

"The liberation of Kuwait has begun" may turn into one of history's all time oxymorons. The fact is that with those words a deadly destructive war began. It had been foreshadowed not only by months of political posturing, but by years of military buildup. If this is liberation, what is oppression? More to the point, how do we stop it **right now** even though yesterday would have been preferable?

Perhaps by publication time the war will be over. I pray as much. But the lessons to be learned from a careful analysis of it will be necessary, regardless, as we endeavor to prevent similar catastrophes in the future.

War does horrible things to people. Some are killed, others maimed. Still others are confused, unsure of what to think or where to turn. Children are made to grow up when they see that people kill each other and get paid for it. Stranger things have happened, but I have

liberation perspective as part of the reparations work that needs to be done, both at home and abroad, in the wake of such devastation.

First, the need to resort to war is a communal failure to share power. I sometimes feel like an ethical extra-terrestrial with such assertions, as most U.S. citizens, at least pollsters would have us think, do not question much less believe in a need to share power. A large part of the problem is due to the fact that fantasy has become reality, fiction has replaced fact.

Football, the most popular sport of the day, is war's most apt metaphor. But war in a nuclear age is not football writ large. It is a scandalous flirting with mass destruction that is designed to redistribute power among the powerful, to stop, literally dead in their tracks, any who would presume to exert their own authority. This is not to say that Saddam Hussein acted heroically by taking Kuwait. Quite to the contrary he

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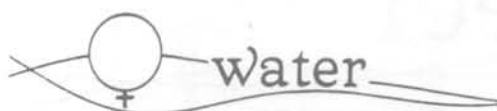
found myself in league with the Pope for an instant when he claims that "war is not likely to bring an adequate solution to international problems and that, even though an unjust situation might be momentarily met, the consequences that would possibly derive from war would be devastating and tragic." Any self-respecting feminist theologian would wonder about the company I keep (Cardinal Ratzinger is on the same side), but times being what they are I welcome peace-seekers in any dress.

War forces us to look honestly at society. Press censorship is rampant this time around, but even through such a filter several social dimensions are so obvious that not even the muzzling of pool reporters or the obscenity of calling dead civilians "collateral damage" can obscure them. I lift them up from a feminist

got into the game with the rest. But it is to indicate that the reaction is beyond all reasonable limits when sanctions and diplomacy remain to be employed. Yet football thinking prevails where diplomacy is abandoned: team 1/team 2, defense/offense, winner/loser. Air strikes are likened to touchdowns; borders are gridirons and bunkers hold huddles underground.

It works both ways in this intricate mesh. One coach, who could have been a general, compared nude football players flashing their genitals at female reporters in the locker room to Patriot missiles intercepting Scuds. Such obscenities reveal that the failure is massive and systemic, a problem so pervasive as to be almost incomprehensible, so sinister as to be joked about in the crudest terms of power over others. Jokes reveal more than they conceal. In

(continued on next page)



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

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Peace... (continued from page 1)

this instance what is naked is aggression and contempt.

Second, congressional approval of war is the fruit of U.S. society's lack of political education. Proper parents teach children to avoid religion and politics in polite company. Such false gentility is an integral part of the middle class morass that renders citizens of this country virtually speechless when it comes to articulating moral positions. Confusion between First Amendment rights and the appropriate implementation of values in public life leaves us without a vocabulary and without forums in which to say "no thank you" to war without being labeled unpatriotic, as if patriotism and not justice were sacrosanct.

This malady afflicts most elected officials who, even those in Congress who voiced opposition, have gone with the political wind. Simplistic religious appeals for the lion to lie down with the lamb are not the goal. Rather, developing critical thinking, the capacity to sort out ideas from opinions, facts from fiction, is a pressing U.S. need. Talking together in town meetings, at the dinner table, in school debates and teach-ins is a lost art that people with religious values can help to resurrect. Ironically, churches and base communities are among

all, increase my skepticism about a way out.

Feminist women, because of their creative marginality in society and church, seem to have the capacity for complex and innovative thinking. The Rev. Joan Campbell, newly elected head of the National Council of Churches, was the only religious leader in a televised ecumenical foursome (Catholic, Jewish and Muslim traditions being represented by men) able to state without nuance that war is unethical. I do not hear women lavishing philosophical attention on the "just war" theory, agonizing over the proportionality of various weapons. Instead, Western women reach out to understand Islam, to meet Arab women, to make friends with Palestinian women, to figure out what to do about conditions that create war.

Fourth, win, lose or draw, the outcome of this war will be the same; that is what needs attention. Blood for oil is too simple a formula, but war for peace is no less ridiculous. I fear winning because it will mean the triumph of Nintendo over negotiation, technology over transformation. It will mean a bigger military budget to jump start a stalled economy. It will mean that issues of portent—AIDS research, anti-racism work, educational programs, health care benefits—will be back burned almost indefinitely.

I fear loss, too. It will mean, a la post-

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the few places where people expect to talk about things that matter.

Third, women experts on war are, happily, few and far between, but on peace need to be consulted. A new cottage industry of this war is retired military men who analyze it on television. Women do not even approach this glass ceiling because there are virtually none with the combat credentials to second-guess those in the field. Conspicuously absent in both genders, however, are the peace experts who could be called on to speculate publicly on how resolutions might be found without resort to combat. They do not make sexy television, as media watchers say, but then neither do the generals.

I look hopefully to women on the peace front. On both the ecclesial and secular scenes, patriarchal patterns of peace-making have emerged. Is it any wonder we have war when even those who seek peace cannot do it in an inclusive way? Some macho peacemakers shouting down their flag waving counterparts make it hard to tell which side anyone is on. Prayer services that invoke God the Father, Lord and Ruler of

Vietnam, the need to build more weapons to avert the chances of losing again. A draw, whatever that might mean, cashes out to the same bill—build more to win next time. With all expected alternatives resulting in the same scenario, like football games giving way to more football, spring practice to training camp to regular season to bowl games and back again, there is an overwhelming sense of futility to it all.

The end is in sight at this writing (February 1991) but the fact that it does not matter in terms of how the U.S. government is likely to posture is a chilling reality that could invite apathy. Nothing is further from my intention. Analysis is useful insofar as it gives us clues to empowering action that gets results.

Daunting vision is the stock in trade of theology rendered useless by reality. Mine is a more modest proposal crafted to prevent future war with integrity:

1. Power sharing will only take place when U.S. and other major powers give up the notion of being Number One, policeman to the world.

Democracy is a false promise for many of our own citizens who cannot afford to participate in the process. Widespread media censorship currently makes the U.S. anything but a model democracy. We are told that wider access would give away strategy to the "enemy," even the words have a hollow ring. But one has only to step outside the U.S., simpler yet, write, fax or phone a friend abroad, to realize that world opinion runs counter to what pollsters tell us is overwhelming U.S. support for the war. It is important to note that women have consistently supported it in smaller numbers than men and their support is, of all things, "softer" because as war heats up women back off.

Religious people can open the dialogue on this, open our ears for suggestions on how to be responsible citizens of the world amid unequally distributed resources. We need not abandon

nism. The same can be said for women experts on war who will inevitably grace the television. But just as gender is more than sex, peace is more than piecemeal. It will take an enormous effort to turn things around: call friends, call the White House, listen to children, contact colleagues abroad to see things through their eyes, get a group together to strategize, trust the process of negotiation rather than the product of war, visit refugees, withhold taxes, demand renewable energy sources. No one of these will achieve peace, but tens of thousands of sorties have not either, so pick your process.

4. A new outcome, indeed the way to a really new world order, will be a work of the ethical imagination. So many friends and colleagues are feeling impotent to do anything to stop the war, sickened by the destruction and ripped off by the pretenses of both media and govern-

We need to say that "collateral damage" means innocent people, including children, who are maimed or dead.

our citizenship in order to be ethical, in fact our ethical imperatives to love well and act justly can accompany patriotism in well thought-out alternatives to war.

2. Lack of political education can be remedied by practice. We need to begin by speaking plain English, passing over the euphemisms for the harsh reality of war. Our children need to know what bombs do, not simply what a joystick is. We need to say that "collateral damage" means innocent people, including children, who are maimed or dead. "Human remains pouches" are body bags in which dead bodies are returned cold to their loved ones.

We need to tell children, Marlin Fitzwater notwithstanding, that some Iraqis, like some U.S. citizens, have no regard for human life but most people do and are opposed to war. If we are unwilling to tell children the truth about what we are doing, we ought not do it. Truth is the beginning of political education and it isn't always polite. I regret the fact that my four year old niece has nightmares about the war. The fault lies not with the fact that she watches TV news, but with those who support war. The only way I know to avoid such nightmares is to stop the daytime violence that causes them.

3. Peace-makers come in both genders, but it is time to call on "women's ways of knowing" to offset the macho mind set that holds sway. I have struggled with the inevitability of women in combat ("Medals on Our Blouses? A Feminist Theological Look at Women in Combat," *WATERwheel* Vol. 3, No. 3, Fall 1990) bemoaning it as the triumph of patriarchy over femi-

ment, which after a while seem to be one and the same. I do not have a magic potion but I know that the billions of dollars being spent each week mean not only death in war but death at home. Imagine how many years it will be before health, education and other social services will be a part of affordable budgeting. While military types brag that this is an off the shelf war, using what was stockpiled in the Reagan years, it is clear that someone will have to pay the piper when all of this is over. It will not be the military with their combat pay and retirement benefits, but the same people who pay now with their inadequate health care, their antiquated educational resources and their lack of jobs. Women and people from minority racial-ethnic groups suffer disproportionately; in common parlance they are "the losers."

Rejecting war means rejecting the idea that someone has to win, someone has to lose. It means understanding that football is a game, no substitute for careful thinking and common sense. It means imagining a way to work out differences through dialogue and negotiation; valuing Iraqi children as much as our own; citing casualties in one figure without distinguishing between/among nationalities; envisioning a solution to the whole Middle East situation. If religious ethicists don't begin the process, don't replace football with such fantasy in the human imagination, who will?

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



In Memory of Her

More expressive than diamonds, more enduring than fresh flowers, memories help us to celebrate the present even as they recall the past. "Remember when we...?" "And you always said..." "I'll never forget..."

"In Memory of Her" is a doubly rewarding way to recall someone dear or to tell someone dear—mother, sister, daughter, partner, wife, mentor, companion, friend—how much she means to you right now. Your personal tribute is a gift the living will treasure and your contribution "in memory of her" will help spread WATER's work. To remember someone special to you, write a brief tribute in the following manner and send it with your contribution.

from Marlene McDonnell, Mt. Pleasant, LA

Florence McDonnell, my mother, a strong woman of integrity, of faith and of prayer; a wonderful Irish wit, a liberated woman, she wanted all people to appreciate their gifts and goodness.

from Dawn Hedrick, Baltimore, MD

Lynn Shuppel and Gloria Jean Hammel, in celebration of their commitment service, women of love.

from Rebecca Gillelan and Jane E'del, Harrisburg, PA

Lynn Shuppel and Gloria Jean Hammel, on the occasion of their celebration of commitment, women of dignity and integrity.

from Sue Hood, Ada, MI

Maria Gabriel, a wise and valiant woman who loved, laughed and believed in every person. God and Maria are dancing in harmony.

from Renate Rose, Honolulu, HI

Ingrid, for her sacrifice for others, her cheerfulness and love of life, I give thanks.

from Carol Scinto, Rockville, MD

Gael Willingham, my sister, my first best friend, who literally kept my head above water when I was in over my depth; who broke trail for me, encouraged me in new and unexpected pathways—and still does.

from Mary E. Hunt and Diann Neu

Florence Blythe Murdock, mother of Carol Scinto, who in life longed to travel more than she was able; now that she has passed to eternal life her spirit will accompany WATER women to the Southern Cone, a fitting tribute to her vim and verve.

Background

Peace, only peace, is what our world needs yesterday, today and tomorrow. Water is a common, sacred source which symbolizes new beginnings, global connections, and personal transformations. Peace and water are both necessary for life. Using the symbol of water, this celebration calls forth a blessing of peace from the spirits of the universe.

This ritual works well as an opening to a meeting, a conference or a retreat. The ideal space, of course, is a place that is near or beside water. My favorite celebration of this liturgy happened beside the ocean in Maine. My most meaningful celebration took place in California during the drought. Any place outside provides an effective setting.

Preparation

Invite seven people to be blessers. Encourage them to adapt the script to the experience of the group and to include a variety of languages. Gather a bowl, a pitcher of water, and a towel. Place these items on a central altar table or, if the celebration is outside, place them on a rock, tree stump or the ground.

Opening Music

Play Handel's "Music Suite" or chant "O Great Spirit" by Robby Gass. For the chant, invite people to move to the music: step right with the right foot, move the left foot beside the right foot, repeat the pattern. Repeat the chant until all have returned to their starting place. Add a drum beat for accent.

O Great Spirit, Earth, Sun, Sky and Sea
You are inside and all around me.

Naming Ceremony

Women, men and children around the world work that peace with justice may prevail. Let us say our names and, in solidarity with peacemakers, speak the name of peacemakers. [i.e. I am (name). I bring into our circle (whom) i.e. the Co-Madres of El Salvador, the mothers of the disappeared and political prisoners. The naming continues until the circle is complete.]



Call to Celebration

Our circle is large because we are not alone. People throughout the world are working for peace. Filled with this awareness, let the spirit inside us ebb and flow like a mighty ocean!

Let the spirit inside us rise like a gentle breeze! Let us gather as people of peace called by the Spirits, the Holy Spirits. Let us gather in peace, only peace, using water, our common, sacred source that symbolizes beginnings, renewal, new life.

Song: "Living Water" by Colleen Fulmer
c 1984 from *Her Wings Unfurled*

*added by Diann Neu

Come, you hungry, come, you thirsty;

Drink living water, come to the well.

Come, you weary, bring your burdens; Drink....

Come, you wounded, bring your suffering; Drink...

*Come, you searching, bring your questions; ...

*Come, you angry, bring your outrage; ...

*Come, you... Who else needs to come to waters of peace? Tell us and we will sing.

Invoking the Spirits

We come here with all of these people and more. We gather from the four corners of the earth, from the seven directions of the wind, to remember all people who yearn for peace, all people who come to the waters today.

We call upon the Spirits of the East, North, West, South, Above, Below and Center to shower us and the earth with their blessings, especially their gifts of peace.

(Each blesser faces her direction and uses her own gestures to invoke the spirit. If possible, she prays the first two lines in a second language. Note, because of the war in the Middle East, this invocation begins east. Begin with the direction that is appropriate to your needs.)

East

Turn to the East with me. Kneel and touch your forehead to the ground in the Moslem prayer posture. (pause)

(pray in Arabic)

O Great Spirit of the East, Power of the air!

We invoke you and praise your name. (pause)

Breath of Life, Creator of Dawn,

Faithful Rising Sun, Come!

By the air that is your breath,

Send forth your light of peace.

Move your body to greet the Spirit of the East.

(pause)

O Great Spirit of the East,

Be here now as we remember women, men and

children of the East:

People groping for peace, the Middle East;

People struggling for justice, China;

People migrating to find food, Ethiopia.

(The blesser pours water into the bowl.)

Spirit of the East, bless us with your power!



Come to

by Diann Neu

North

Turn to the North. Let your body and arms reach for the stars. (pause)

(pray in French)

O Great Spirit of the North, Power of the Earth!

We invoke you and praise your name. (pause)

Mysterious North Star, Fierce Winter Wind,

Nourishing Earth Mother, Come!

By the earth that is your body,

Send forth your strength for peace.

Move your body to greet the Spirit of the North.

(pause)

O Great Spirit of the North,

Be here now as we remember women, men and children of the North:

People protecting their wilderness heritage,

Canada;

People fighting for economic survival, the indigenous people of Alaska;

People creating a social and equitable society, Sweden.

(The blesser pours water into the bowl.)

Spirit of the North, bless us with your power!

West

Turn to the West. Let your body slowly reach for the earth like the setting sun. (pause)

(pray in Navajo)

O Great Spirit of the West, Power of water!

We invoke you and praise your name. (pause)

Cycle of Change, Ever-colorful Sunset,

Peaceful Night Wonder, Come!

By the waters of your womb,

Send forth your ebb and flow of peace.

Move your body to greet the Spirit of the West.

(pause)

O Great Spirit of the West,

Be here now as we remember women, men and children of the West:

People working for religious, economic and political justice, Ireland;

People finding new ways trade can go on in a just and equitable manner, Common Market Countries;

Migrant farm workers, California.

(The blesser pours water into the bowl.)

Spirit of the West, bless us with your power!

South

Turn to the South. Let your body move like a burning flame. (pause)

(pray in Spanish)

O Great Spirit of the South, Power of fire!

We invoke you and praise your name. (pause)

Flame of Justice, Torch in the Night,

Liberator of the oppressed, Come!

By the fire that is your passion,

Waters of Peace



Send forth your flame of peace.
Move your body to greet the Spirit of the South.
(pause)
O Great Spirit of the South,
Be here now as we remember women, men and children of the South:
Mothers of the Disappeared working for human rights, El Salvador and Guatemala; Argentina and Chile;
People witnessing for Peace, Nicaragua;
People crying for freedom, South Africa.
(The blessing pours water into the bowl.)
Spirit of the South, bless us with your power.

Above

Rise up. Let your body soar. (pause)
(pray in sign)
O Great Spirit of Above, Power of the sky!
We invoke you and praise your name. (pause)
Dreamer of Visions, Soaring Mother Eagle,
Cloud of Unknowing, Come!
By the sky that is your presence,
Send forth your vision of peace.
Move your body to greet the Spirit of Above.
(pause)
Be here now as we remember women, men and children of vision:
The elderly living with wisdom, in every culture;
Women-Church leaders with courage and insight, Cincinnati and Chicago;
People who struggle to keep outer space free of star wars, peacemakers in every country.
(The blessing pours water into the bowl.)
Spirit of Above, bless us with your power!

Below

Bend over. Let your body reach for the ground.
(pray in German)
O Great Spirit of Below, Power of the Sea!
We invoke you and praise your name. (pause)
Hidden Treasure, Undiscovered Food Source,
Connector of Continents, Come!
By the sea that is your depth,
Send forth your revelation for peace.
Move your body to greet the Spirit of Below.
(pause)
O Great Spirit of Below,
Be here now as we remember women, men and children who have endured:
Loved ones who have died, of every age and in every family;
Men, women and children dying and living with AIDS, in every country;
People killed in unjust wars, Central America, Middle East, Southeast Asia and China.
(The blessing pours water into the bowl.)
Spirit of Below, bless us with your power.

Center

Turn to the center and form a circle by putting our arms around each other. (pause)
(pray in Swahili)
O Great Spirit of Everything that is Center,
Power of the mountains!
We invoke you and praise your name. (pause)
Rock of Ages, Untapped Energy,
Enduring Strength, Come!
By the mountains that are your integrity,
Send forth your sacred peace.
Move your body to greet the Spirit of Center.
(pause)
O Great Spirit of Everything that is Center,
Be here now as we remember women, men and children who work with integrity:
Caregivers to the homeless, the poor, the disadvantaged, in every city;
Teachers and exemplars to our young, in every nation;
Those who do the hard and thankless tasks—road builders, street sweepers, mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, in every society.
(The blessing pours water into the bowl.)
Spirit of Everything that is Center, bless us with your power.

Community Response

Please echo after me.
Spirits of the East, North, West
South, Above, Below and Center, (echo)
We invoke you and praise your names. (echo)
Holy Spirits, enkindle us with your peace
for the transformation of the world. (echo)
Amen. Blessed Be. So It Is. (echo)

Song: "Come Drink Deep" by Carolyn McDade © 1983 Surtsey Publishing from *Rain Upon Dry Land*

Come drink deep of living waters
Without cup bend close to the ground
Wade with bare feet into troubled waters
Where love of life abounds

I turn my head to sky rains falling
Wash the wounds of numbness from my soul
Turn my heart in tides of fierce renewal
Where love and rage run whole

Come rains of heaven on the dry seed
Rains of love on every tortured land
Roots complacent awoken in compassion
So hope springs in our hands...
Come drink deep.

Blessing of WATER

Come! Let us gather around the fountain of the waters of peace. (The leader stands and with a gesture invites everyone to take hands and form a circle around the water.)

You who are thirsty, come to the water.
You who are inquisitive, come to the water.
You who are in need of hospitality,
come to the water.

You who are ... What do you need? Tell us and we will invite you to the waters of peace. [i.e. I need patience. To which the group responds, You who need patience, come to the water.]

We have filled our water vessel with the peace of the spirits of the East, North, West, South, Above, Below and Center. Extend your hands, palms up, and let us bless this water.

Blessed is this water which quenches our thirst, refreshes our bodies, gives birth to our children, heals our wounds, washes our clothes and dishes, wakes us up in the morning, and cooks our food. Blessed is this water.

Blessing of Ourselves

Come! Let us bless ourselves with this water.
Touch your heart and say after me:
Bless my heart that I may love deeply. (echo)
Touch your eyes, saying:
Bless my eyes that I may see the flowers. (echo)
Touch your ears, saying:
Bless my ears that I may hear the wind. (echo)
Touch your mouth, saying:
Bless my mouth that I may taste with pleasure. (echo)
Touch your womb, or where your womb used to be, saying:
Bless my womb that I may give birth to peace. (echo)
Touch your feet, saying:
Bless my feet that I may walk the path of peace. (echo)
Touch your hands, saying:
Bless my hands that I may touch with love and care. (echo)
What else would you like to bless....
Touch and embrace the people around you blessing them in your own words.

Closing Chant and Dance
"O Great Spirit" with circle dance



Prayer of Sending Forth

We have come to waters of peace. Now we must carry the spirit of peace and healing with us. Send forth your spirits, Holy One of Peace, and with your spirits send us, your people. Send us to all corners of the universe where the work of peace must be done. Spirit of Healing, make us instruments of peace which will reconcile our war-torn world. Spirit of many winds, hold us close, yet set us free to do the work that calls us blessed. This we pray as your people gathered and sent. Amen. Blessed be. Let it be so.

Diann Neu, M.Div., STM, co-directs WATER and is a feminist liberation liturgist.



In And About

Lots goes on at WATER and this winter has been no exception. The Women in Ministry Breakfast is popular. Barbara Cullom spoke on feminist/womanist advances in scriptural studies and Clare Fischer presented on a theology of work.

Lucy Tatman and Beth Wheeler have put the Resource Center in good working order; borrowers are many. Now they are working on WATER archives.

WATER staff spend a good deal of time out of the office as well. This winter Diann Neu and Beth Wheeler attended the 5th Encuentro of Latin American and Caribbean Feminists in San Bernardo, Argentina. Mary E. Hunt lectured at the Evangelical Academy at Bad Boll in Germany.

Diann consulted with San Diego humanistic psychologists on ritual and gave feminist liturgy workshops in Los Angeles, Dubuque, and Minneapolis for the BVM Women's Office.

Mary gave lectures at The Wesley Theological Seminary and at Western Maryland College. She presented a paper at the American Academy of Religion meeting in New Orleans where she received an award for her book *Fierce Tenderness*.

We joined the Grail for the celebration of its 50th Anniversary in the United States, and the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace in their leadership transition.

We worked with Quixote Center's Maureen Fiedler in the development of the Women-Church Convergence's statement against U.S. military intervention in the Gulf. Mary did radio talk shows, sermons and classes on the topic.

WATER is now represented at the American Academy of Liturgy, which Diann Neu was invited to join. We are also part of the National Association for Science, Technology and Society where Mary Hunt is a new board member, as well as at Catholics for a Free Choice as Mary returns to that board.

WATER continues to welcome LEAP people, folks with various disabilities who are in job training, to work in the office. Laurel Buck and April Reider are recent trainees.

Women Crossing Worlds

by Diann Neu and Beth Wheeler

From its beginning, WATER has actively directed its energies and abilities to developing an international network of feminist justice-seeking friends working for social change. Our "Women Crossing Worlds" project, initiated in 1983, has become a vital channel for sharing ideas, incentives, initiatives and personal experiences among and between women of North and South America.

Last November we broadened our annual interchange with the Southern Cone by participating in the 5th Encuentro of Latin American and Caribbean Feminists, joining our Argentine representative Sara Newbery at the week-long meeting in San Bernardo, Argentina.

While there we met with Argentine, Uruguayan and Chilean associates to plan a unique two week intercambio for women from North America interested in furthering contact with South American counterparts. The resulting WATER study tour, scheduled for this April 5-18, is designed as an empowering exchange of diverse experiences, as well as a sharing of commitments and ideas that inform the faith and politics of both South and North American women. We'll report on this next issue.

The Encuentro itself brought together three thousand women from more than 30 countries. Entitled "Feminismo Como Un Movimiento Transformador (Feminism as a Transforming Movement)", the meeting convened in San Bernardo, a five-hour drive south of Buenos Aires, with introductory singing, dancing and theatre interspersed with moving commentary from participants from each nation represented (including a request by Salvadorans for a moment of silence to commemorate those killed in brutal murders and bombings in their country).

Subsequent workshops, lectures, films, networking sessions, press conferences and rituals all brought to bear the importance of dialogue and outreach for understanding the realities of each country and for determining effective strategies for action. Alicia d'Amico, noted Argentine photographer, expressed her fear that "feminism is in crisis." The challenge, in

her words, is "to be able to assimilate the large number of women in the movement without losing our objectives."

Recurring themes throughout the week—violence against women, human rights, sexuality, spirituality, and reproductive rights—demonstrated that feminist concerns know no national boundaries. A "Declaration of San Bernardo" drafted and signed by participants called for universal acceptance of a woman's right to choose whether to carry a pregnancy to term, and to decide for herself whether and when to bear children.

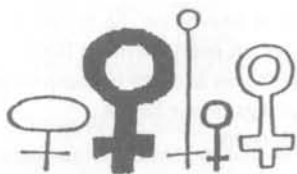
The topic of celebrating "500 years of the Americas" in 1992 led to heated discussion and a repudiation of the concept of celebrating invasion and conquest. Instead, the group proposed condemning the planned October 12 "celebration" and observing October 11, 1992 as the last day of freedom before the subjugation of indigenous people.

A WATER ritual gave vivid expression to the physical reality and spiritual depth of women's lives. In a special ceremony created by Sara Newbery with Diann Neu's assistance, the gathering celebrated the inherent power and beauty of women's bodies, from menstruation through menopause.

Concluding the Fifth Encuentro, participants left San Bernardo to march, more than 2,000 strong, through the streets of Buenos Aires calling for an end to violence against women. For many whose countries are still controlled by repressive dictatorships, this was a first opportunity to demonstrate publicly for justice.

The next encuentro, scheduled for 1992, will be held in a Central American country (possibly Nicaragua) with particular emphasis on a greater representation of poor, black and indigenous women from throughout the Western Hemisphere. Says Pat Farrell, who came to San Bernardo from her work in El Salvador, "Many of the Salvadoran women, coming out of a tremendously developed tradition of 'lucha (struggle)' are only beginning to see that to devote time and energy to gender issues is not a betrayal of the revolutionary struggle. To the contrary. I am excited about the coming Central American Encuentro."

Sara (Safina to her many friends) describes WATER's expanding "Women Crossing Worlds" program as part of "the great task for the future of women." In the words of a women's center in Matagalpa, Nicaragua, "Not only do we want to give life, we want to transform it." The Encuentro and the forthcoming WATER study tour are steps in that process.



V ENCUESTRO FEMINISTA
LATINOAMERICANO
Y DEL CARIBE



Resources for Winter Reading



Try some of the following for new insights and challenging ideas:

Bowie, Fiona, editor. **BEGUINE SPIRITUALITY: Mystical Writings of Mechthild of Magdeburg, Beatrice of Nazareth, and Hadewijch of Brabant.** New York: Crossroad, 1990 (130 pages, \$9.95).

Thirteenth century writings of these Beguines help readers to understand the foundations of this lay group, a model for contemporary feminist efforts at women's religious agency in a patriarchal church. A companion volume is **A MIRROR FOR SIMPLE SOULS: THE MYSTICAL WORK OF MARGUERITE PORTE**, edited and translated by Charles Crawford with introduction by Anne L. Barstow. It contains the work of a French mystic who was thought to be a male, whose name was considered "anonymous," and who turned out to be Marguerite Portet. So much for believing history books...

Chittister, Joan O.S.B. **WOMANSTRENGTH: MODERN CHURCH MODERN WOMEN.** Kansas City, MO: Sheed and Ward, 1990 (187 pages, \$9.95).

Essays, some previously published, on women and church that focus on the simple but still elusive notion of equality and the necessary but distant possibility of peace.

DeBerg, Betty A. **UNGODLY WOMEN: GENDER AND THE FIRST WAVE OF AMERICAN FUNDAMENTALISM.** Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990 (165 pages, \$10.95).

A feminist church historian shows how the current fundamentalist positions on women, abortion, homosexuality and the like were developed. Links between fundamentalist Catholicism and fundamentalist Protestantism were foreshadowed by 19th century adherents' views.

Greene, Dana. **EVELYN UNDERHILL: ARTIST OF THE INFINITE LIFE.** New York: Crossroad, 1990. (179 pages, \$18.95).

This biography of an increasingly influential spiritual writer provides just the introduction and depth needed to whet the appetite to read more of the British writer's primary works.

Haney, Eleanor H. **VISION AND STRUGGLE: MEDITATIONS ON FEMINIST SPIRITUALITY AND POLITICS.** Portland, ME: Astarte Shell Press (P.O. Box 10453, Portland 04104), 1989 (135 pages, \$10.95).

A wonderfully accessible treatment of many

complex themes including spirituality and sexuality, ecology and economic justice written from a communitarian starting point. Excellent discussion starters for study/support groups.

Mascetti, Manuela Dunn. **THE SONG OF EVE.** New York: Fireside Books/Simon and Schuster, 1990 (239 pages, \$16.95).

Goddess worship is gaining spiritual ground. This beautiful volume features vivid illustrations as well as seven distinct verses about the Goddess as Virgin, Creator/Destroyer, Lover/Seductress, Mother, Priestess and Muse.

O'Neill, Maura. **WOMEN SPEAKING, WOMEN LISTENING: WOMEN IN INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE.** Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990 (131 pages, \$14.95).

An important treatment of women's models of interfaith exchange with special attention to how feminism informs the discussion. No contemporary ecumenical workers can afford to pass this by.

Riley, Maria and Nancy Sylvester. **TROUBLE AND BEAUTY: WOMEN ENCOUNTER CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING.** Washington, DC: Center of Concern, LCWR, NETWORK, 1991 (52 pages, \$3.95).

Catholic social teachings are the source of both "trouble and beauty" for feminists. This handbook will launch many a discussion and provide insights into how positive aspects can be utilized for social and ecclesial change.

Robins, Wendy S. and Musimbi R.A. Kanyoro. **SPEAKING FOR OURSELVES: BIBLE STUDIES AND DISCUSSION STARTERS BY WOMEN.** Geneva, Switzerland: World Council of Churches Publications, 1990 (117 pages, \$9.95).

The book does just what it says it does: herein are hints and glimpses of how to make bible study come alive for women's groups.

Taylor, Mark Kline. **REMEMBERING ESPERANZA: A CULTURAL-POLITICAL THEOLOGY FOR NORTH AMERICAN PRAXIS.** Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990 (292 pages, \$29.95 Cloth).



Vamos mujer. Chile

A useful effort to make the connections between and among the many issues that make up a North American theology worth doing.

Teubal, Savina J. **HAGAR THE EGYPTIAN: THE LOST TRADITION OF THE MATRIARCHS.** San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990 (226 pages, \$19.95).

Women's religious experience has been distorted when key figures like Hagar are completely misunderstood. This author takes a step on the road to clarity about the matriarchs, a welcome addition to feminist scholarship where imagination and politics play an up-front role.

Toubia, Nahid. **WOMEN OF THE ARAB WORLD.** London: Zed Books (57 Caledonian Rd., London N1 9BU, England), 1988 (163 pages, \$10).

An excellent collection on Arab women that will help in sorting out the cultural complexities in the Middle East. Another useful volume on the topic is Denise Larder Carmody's **RELIGIOUS WOMAN: CONTEMPORARY REFLECTIONS ON EASTERN TEXTS.** New York: Crossroad, 1991 (143 pages, \$9.95), which contains helpful readings for understanding Islamic, Buddhist, etc. texts from women's perspectives.

Tucker, Cynthia Grant. **PROPHETIC SISTERHOOD: LIBERAL WOMEN MINISTERS OF THE FRONTIER, 1880-1930.** Boston: Beacon Press, 1990 (284 pages, \$24.95).

Twenty-one Unitarian and Universalist women ministers led the way to a social-justice oriented faith on the Great Plains. An inspiring and informative read.

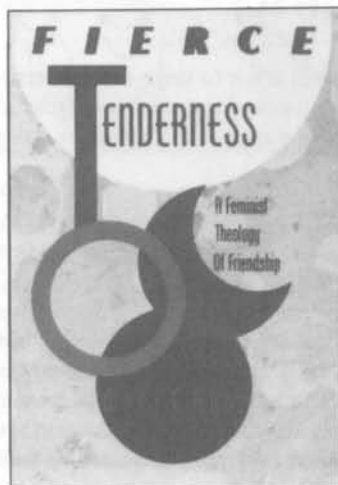
Vidulich, Dorothy A. **PEACE PAYS A PRICE: A STUDY OF MARGARET ANNA CUSACK.** Washington, DC: Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, 1225 Newton St., NE, Washington, DC 20017, (86 pages, \$7).

The inspiring story of the founder of a religious community written by a member who lives the founder's vision. Dorothy Vidulich captures the spirit and spunk of Margaret Anna Cusack in an elegant but accessible volume that is a model for writing feminist church history.

Welch, Sharon D. **A FEMINIST ETHIC OF RISK.** Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1990 (216 pages, \$9.95).

The feminist move from patriarchal protection (read: control) to radical risk (read: solidarity) is expressed in Sharon Welch's theological look at Middle America.

WATER Best Sellers



Fierce Tenderness A Feminist Theology of Friendship

by Mary E. Hunt

Winner of the 1990 Crossroads/Continuum Women's Studies Award

Here is a learned, sensitive, and experience-based book on one of the most neglected religious values—friendship. It's a book that offers hope, insight, and consolation to all committed persons—women and men alike.

"In this world our deepest commitments are subjected to criteria of safety. The Crossroad Women's Studies Award Advisory Committee chose **Fierce Tenderness** because the author is concerned to create a theo-ethical world where all kinds of relationships are safer. When people choose to live in right relationship, paradigms of the holy emerge. These sprigs of holiness must be tenderly nourished and fiercely protected. Mary E. Hunt's work is about these tasks. It is a work worthy of honor." —Award Advisory Committee (Available through WATERworks Press for \$23.)

Women of Fire: A Pentecost Event

by Mary E. Hunt and Diann Neu

Mary E. Hunt and Diann Neu proclaim an international spirit of feminism that gave birth to the reality of women as church. Mary's inspiring talks focus on passion, pain and politics. Diann's powerful liturgy, planned with participants, reclaims the center of religious ritual—the progressive meal complete with festive processions. Carol White's introduction chronicles the format of a weekend sponsored by De Tiltenberg in The Netherlands for European women which gave rise to this book. They invite you to use these materials for a Pentecost event or for your reflective reading. (Available through WATERworks Press for \$8.)



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