



# water wheel

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

## From the Editors

Religion is a hot topic again. 'Tis ever thus in the summer when denominational gatherings happen. The Presbyterians took the prize this year with their excellent report on sexuality, "Keeping Body and Soul Together." It earned them endless press coverage (including "Nightline"), and in the process awakened many to the fact that religious people are talking about real life matters. While it was not embraced by the denomination as a whole, the report showed a church body plucky in the process.

The Episcopalians went on to discuss homosexuality in the clergy, rather belaboring the obvious, but again, in good faith. Likewise for Lutherans on abortion, and so it goes, the wheels of change grinding slowly, haltingly, several turns forward and always at least one back. But religion has not provided the only drama this season; changes in the Soviet Union make such ecclesial wranglings pale by comparison.

What is exciting in all of this is how elastic the human spirit really is. One day we are afraid for our lives that monstrous forces will overwhelm us. The next day we are cozying up to the same forces. It gets very confusing. In times like these, we at WATER find solace in Julian of Norwich's claim: "All shall be well, I'm telling you, let the winter come and go. All shall be well again, I know."



## Goddess Bless You

by Mary E. Hunt

Someone sneezes in the office at the height of hay fever season. "God bless you," a thoughtful officemate replies. The sneezer says, "Thank you," and they both go back to work. A variation on this common practice is one of the few German words native speakers of English utter. The sneeze, the *Gesundheit*, and the silence. This time, no reference is made to the divine, just a wish that the sneezer's health will improve (or, as I have always suspected, a wish that the other will not become infected). Someday, perhaps sooner rather than later, I expect to hear someone say "Goddess bless you" after I sneeze.

This change in language may seem trivial or sound odd, but the fact is that female imagery for the divine is the surest proof of the impact of feminist/womanist/mujerista theologies on

the relationship human beings have with our deities, and that these relationships parallel our human exchanges. What was most threatening, initially to me and still to most people, is the notion of changing from a top-down God "in charge" to a more circular "we are all in this together" Goddess. That shift makes the gender difference pale.

One of the first Goddess *aficionadas* whom I encountered was amazed that I did not share her enthusiasm for the female personification of the deity. She pointed out that in her Protestant tradition God had been quite anthropomorphic, with various appearances from Moses' account to Jesus. She could read about, see, sing about and pray to someone quite specific. While she rejected the content of the biblical God on theo-political grounds, it was

*...female imagery for the divine is the surest proof of the impact of feminist/womanist/mujerista theologies on the culture as a whole.*

the culture as a whole. While I do not pretend to write as other than a white, Euro-American woman, I am fascinated and moved by this religious dynamism occasioned on so many fronts. I may be reading more into this, or it may be due to the relatively little going on in patriarchal theology, but I suspect that something spiritually substantial is afoot.

Like many people, I began as a complete skeptic on this scene. I figured early on (and with kudos to Mary Daly) that any divinity was better than God the Father. But my early rejection of God the Mother was more intellectual than visceral. If male gender for the divine were irrelevant unto oppressive, turning the tables would not improve things, I reasoned, unaware of how utterly different a female divinity could be.

It was not until the backlash hit that I realized that gender was the least of it. The real issue is

not surprising that she expected her Goddess to be available in the same way.

My sacramental Catholicism had led me to different expectations of the divine: more symbolic, ethereal and abstract, more available in the imagination than in the Bible. If there were a Goddess, I expected her to be equally unavailable. In short, my friend and I had reverted to type: she embraced her Goddess and scoured the earth for her. I kept the screen dark rather than envision something that I could not prove was there.

Now, fifteen years later, it is clear that my colleague was onto something important. WATER's library is full of scholarly, if controversial, publications on Goddesses: important works like Marija Gimbutas' *The Language of the Goddess*; Elinor W. Gadon's *The Once and Future Goddess*; Carol P. Christ's *Laughter of* (continued on page 2)



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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 have helped thousands of people to be part of an inclusive church.

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## Goddess...

(continued from page 1)

**Aphrodite: Reflections on a Journey to the Goddess.** Women's bookstores carry Goddess tee shirts, medallions and bumper stickers. There are Goddess calendars and books of days, guides to Goddess sites throughout the world, and even Goddess coloring books for our children. One can image, intone and implore Her; one can enlist, embrace and enjoy Her.

I do not like all of the Goddess paraphernalia. Some of it is religious kitsch like the medals and statues of my youth. Nor am I persuaded by some of the scholarship which sounds more like wishful thinking than research. Of course, I reject a great deal of patriarchal scholarship as propaganda, too. But I can no longer push the full figured female from my mind, nor do I want to. These symbols and stories are the stuff of serious change.

The deconstruction of patriarchal religion—in bald terms, the assisted suicide of God the Father—left many of us bereft of divinity. Granted, this took place after the short-lived Death of God movement, and in one of the most secularly-charged eras in modern memory. But the human hunger for meaning and value, sated by the culinary genius of religionists throughout history, finds new expression in Goddess worship.

Perhaps it is having a female doctor, dentist, lawyer, lover, accountant, and other powerful women in my life... Perhaps it is seeing in the faces of older women friends the wisdom I hope to acquire in time... Perhaps it is the pitiful state of even the most progressive churches... Perhaps it is the open-mindedness that comes with

laudable but they inevitably fall short until and unless we acknowledge that what is divine is really female, just as we who are female are really divine. This is some of what Carol P. Christ had in mind when she wrote "Why Women Need the Goddess." I respectfully submit that men need the Goddess too.

The urgency with which we need the Goddess is at once aesthetic and political, at once spiritual and practical. Goddesses, whether Hebrew, Egyptian, Greek or Roman, precisely because they have been religious also-rans in the West, are coming back into vogue.

Two characteristics predominate which spell their importance. First, they are always plural in form and meaning. Few scholars posit one primal Goddess, one who presides or rules or even permits others to be. Rather, Her names are many: Diana, Isis, Minerva, Astarte, Demeter, Gaia, Sophia, Shekinah, and her characteristics are equally varied. So much for the one true God and prohibitions on taking God's name in vain. The very utterance "Goddess" in a patriarchal, monotheistic culture says diversity, pluralism, plenty. This is not a cheap intellectual sleight of hand, but a push toward thinking in new ways, exchanging dichotomies for dynamism.

The second characteristic of Goddesses which makes this clear is their definitive embodiment. Far from the God who is so distant, different, sacred and special as to be indescribable, Goddesses are always very concrete. No one apologizes for the fact that they resemble real people, that they have faces and breasts and hair. In fact, this is their power, their likeness to us and yet their uniqueness, each one with her own strength. Here the transformation of the way we think is equally impressive. God-

### *The urgency with which we need the Goddess is at once aesthetic and political, at once spiritual and practical.*

the years and curiosity... Perhaps it just takes time to try on new options, even if none of them fit, finally... The goddess is appealing.

I read and eventually met Starhawk, an impressive witch whose scholarship and savvy have taken the whole feminist spirituality movement a giant step forward. I saw others who bordered on spiritual hucksters. I realized that one could and must bring critical skills to bear on this new/old religious expression. But analysis is different from criticism, discernment different from prejudice.

There is a reason why the man in front of me at a recent wedding nudged his wife and derided the well-intentioned attempt at inclusive language in an otherwise patriarchal church. He was rude, but he was right; such efforts are

desires seem to suggest that perhaps we are more divine than we had ever imagined.

I still read Goddess materials with a touch of skepticism. However, that is a step up from my approach to much of the patriarchal theological literature which makes my eyes glaze over with its familiar repetitions. I find myself enchanted and intrigued by this literature, almost as if a whole new field is opening before me. I can start to read religion again as if for the first time. I read it carefully, critically, but gratefully. My grandmother did not have a second chance. Blessed be.

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

# Vacations in the "New World Order"

by Mary E. Hunt

A shocking datum reveals that the United States ranks close to the bottom of the list in terms of vacation time for countries throughout the world. The scant two weeks that U.S. workers are allowed hardly permit time to unwind, paint the garage, develop a new skill, or cultivate a hobby. It is frightening to think that as U.S. influence persists unchecked in the world, as the so-called New World Order evolves, this savage custom will become more widespread.

Civilized places like Sweden have far more liberal policies. Workers in Sweden expect a good six weeks. Many have summer homes where they enjoy the long bright days of summer. The Swedish language even has an expression that means "Closed for summer vacation" which everyone understands. Paris, likewise, is empty of all but tourists in August.

and renewed, no crucial matters were ignored since fax and phone go even to the remotest parts, there was time to read and think, all of which finally benefit the organization.

The well deserved rest gave volunteers and paid staff alike a sense that our health and well being count since we plan to be in social change work for the long haul. It was a time to travel, see friends and family, study another language, exercise and attend to the homefront. Above all it was a change, a reminder that life is not only work and work is not all there is to life.

Large-scale social changes will be necessary in this country if increased vacation time is to become the norm. Most people simply cannot afford the time off since their livelihood is based on being on the job. In fact, long vacations for some can exacerbate the class differences in this country, with those in the "infor-

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The French custom persists among local French restaurants inside the Beltway; one could die of thirst here in August rather than find a good sip of Alsatian wine. But this is the exception rather than the rule in the United States, something that needs to be discussed. I propose that justice groups lead the way. After all, schools are closed, children have holidays, why not adults too?

WATER experimented this year with a long summer vacation. Granted, we are a small staff on modest salaries for whom time off is like a big raise. But the fact is that the organization is stronger for it: staff members are refreshed

and renewed, no crucial matters were ignored since fax and phone go even to the remotest parts, there was time to read and think, all of which finally benefit the organization.

This is a justice issue that we need to pay attention to lest we lose sight of the quality of life we crave. Substantial time off is an experiment we intend to continue at WATER and one we recommend highly for other social change groups. It is part of what we understand to be a New World Order, despite the Administration's prattle, and we don't want to be so busy working that we cannot recognize it.



## The Walls Come Tumbling Down

by Carol Scinto

Within six months of WATER's "baptism" eight years ago, we'd overflowed our initial containment vessel into two adjoining office spaces provisionally available to the right.

Now, just in time for a crowded fall schedule, we've spread our WATER wings again—into two fortuitously empty office spaces to the left. With the removal of a dividing wall in the middle, we've now achieved a dramatic breakthrough: much needed room for expanding programs and increasing participants, as well as ever more books, tapes, printed material in our burgeoning Resource Center, not to mention essential breathing space for a growing staff.

At the same time, in need of a new home, the Partners for the Common Good Loan Fund directed by Carol Coston, assisted by former WATER intern and recent seminary graduate Sue Phillips, moved in to share our space. Voila! *Companeras* help with the rent, add to the fun, and become part of an evergrowing alliance.

Let this be a sign unto you: a new funding letter is in the works, detailing how your support is keeping WATER pulsing with fresh energy and fervor.

Meanwhile, Tish Jaccard, long-time WATER volunteer in charge of mailings and banking, moved on from us this summer. We wish her blessings, best wishes and thanks beyond counting for her enormous contribution to our common good.

Carol Scinto is WATER's Editorial Assistant.



ADAPTED BY CHELLA SMITH

## Introduction

Autumn is a traditional time of year for harvest ceremonies. This one celebrates a harvest that is often overlooked: the contribution of women.

Variations on this ritual have been celebrated with groups in Lincoln, NE; Boston, MA; Milwaukee, WI; and Washington, DC. Use this ritual as a guide for creating one that meets your needs and those of your group.

## Preparation

Gather harvest symbols and place them around the room to create a harvest environment, or invite people to bring their own harvest symbols to the celebration. (Examples: corn stalks, nuts, fruits, vegetables, leaves...) Place a table with a cloth on it in the center of a circle where participants will gather. Have apples, honey, corn bread, pumpkin bread, wheat bread, a glass each of milk, cider and wine for the sharings. Invite people to lead various parts of the celebration.

## Invitation to Gather

Welcome to our harvest ritual. This is the season when the earth settles into her maturity. All is ripening, deepening, coming to fruition. We gather in praise of women's harvest.

Leaves show their clothes of many colors. Apples hang robust on sagging branches; nuts on rooftops announce their journey to the ground. We gather in praise of changes.

This is the time of the autumn equinox, lessening light when night equals the day. This is the time when Native American women do dances of "what we live on." Iroquois women move to shuffle dance, corn dance, squash dance. Hopi women separate for Lakon, the corn harvest ceremony, celebrating in the kiva, the underground holy site. As melons mature, the Hopi observe Morawa, a time of women's sexuality and power. Dances of Native American women celebrate women's control of the food supply and fertility. We gather in praise of women's power.

This is the time of Sukkot, the Feast of Booths, in the Jewish calendar. Jewish women build small, open-roofed huts to remind them of the way ancient Israelites lived for forty years in the desert. They welcome their ancestors into their succas and give thanks for their harvest. We gather in praise of holy women.

Generations before us have been attentive to the changes these days mark. All over the earth people celebrate harvest festivals. Tonight we, too, take our place in women's stories and pause to reflect on our harvest. So let our festivities begin!

**Song:** "The Song of Community" by Carolyn McDade, copyright 1981 Surtsey Publishing

We'll weave a love that greens sure as spring, then deepens in summer to the fall autumn brings, Resting still in winter to spiral again Together my friends we'll weave on, (2x)

(Chorus) A love that heals friend, that bends friend, that rising and turning then yields friend, Like mountain to rain or frost in the spring or darkness that turns with the dawn. It's by turning, turning, turning my friend, by turning that love moves on.

## Candle Blessing

(Lighting a candle, someone says:)

Blessed are you, Enlightening One, Shekinah, who gives us light to guide us on the road toward freedom. With joy we kindle these harvest lights in praise of women's spirits.

Cup your hands in front of this light and gesture it toward your eyes and body three times as a blessing.

As this light fills this room, we invite our memories of harvest to shine. Let's take a few moments to capture in a word or phrase what the harvest season means for us. It is a time for ... (pause). Now, let's speak them aloud in a litany form.

Harvest is a time for storing food...grinding grains...canning fruit...gathering wood...covering the garden over with mulch...envisioning...(add others)...telling stories...

**Reading:** Revised by Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza from a prayer "A Wandering Aramean Was My Mother" in *No Longer Strangers*. Responses and goddess added by Diann Neu.

Let us remember the harvest of our foresisters as we listen to "Song of Praise." Echo the last line after me.

A wandering Aramean was my mother.  
In Egypt she bore slaves.  
Then she called to the God of our mothers  
Sarah, Hagar, Rebecca, Rachel, Leah.  
Praise God Who Hears, Forever. (Echo)

# In Praise of

by Diann Neu

A warrior, judge, and harlot was my mother.  
God called her from time to time  
To save and liberate her people  
Miriam, Jael, Deborah, Judith, Tamar.  
Praise Goddess Who Saves, Forever. (Echo)

A Galilean Jew was my mother.  
She bore a wonderful child  
to be persecuted, hated and executed.  
Mary, mother of sorrows, mother of us all.  
Praise God Who Gives Strength, Forever. (Echo)

A witness to Christ's resurrection was my mother.  
The apostle to the apostles,  
Rejected, forgotten, proclaimed a whore,  
Mary of Magdala, foundation of women-church.  
Praise Goddess Who Lives, Forever. (Echo)

An apostle, prophet, founder, and teacher was my mother.  
Called to the discipleship of equals,  
Empowered by the Sophia-God of Jesus,  
Junia, Priscilla, Myrta, Nympha, Thecla.  
Praise God Who Calls, Forever. (Echo)

A faithful Christian woman was my mother.  
Mystic, witch, martyr, heretic, saint, uppity woman,  
A black slave, a poor immigrant, an old hag,  
a wise woman was my mother.  
May we, with her, in every generation  
Praise Goddess Who Images Us All. (Echo)

## Sharing Apple and Honey

We celebrate the harvest of our foresisters by sharing apple and honey together. We remember the fruit of our herstory, the apple, once a symbol of women's denigration and rejection of the Holy One. We reclaim the apple as a positive symbol of women's herstory, our connection to all that is female and holy in God, in Goddess, in women, in men, in children, in all the earth.

The honey symbolizes our hopes that our present recollections of the past will help sweeten the future by renewing our commitment to ourselves. Take a piece of apple, dip it into the honey, and raise this combination as we bless together:

## Blessing of Apple and Honey

Blessed are You, Holy Creator, who brings forth apples and honey from the earth. They are the fruit of women's roots. Be this our connection to You and to She who is female in You and in all.

Let us eat the apple and honey remembering the joy in our lives.



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# Women's Harvest

**Song:** "Let The Women Be There" by Marsie Silvestro, copyright 1987 Marsie Silvestro

If ever I give birth to another person, or create a work with my mouth, my eyes, my hands  
(chorus) Let the women be there, let the women be there, let the women be there by my side.

Whenever I give thanks for the richness of harvest, let the words I speak be heard in every woman's home (chorus)

**Reading:** from *No Turning Back*, by Hopi teacher Polingaysi Qoyawayma

"Mother Corn has fed you as she has fed all Hopi People, since the long, long ago when she was no longer than my thumb. Mother Corn is the promise of food and life. I grind with gratitude for the richness of our harvest, not with cross feelings of working too hard. As I kneel at my grinding stone, I bow my head in prayer, thanking the great forces for provision. I have received much. I am willing to give much in return, for as I have taught you, there must always be a giving back for what one receives."

**Song:** "Gracias A La Vida" by Violetta Parra  
Violetta Parra, a Chilean folk singer who was "disappeared," wrote this song, "Thanks to Life," before she died.

(Sing or play the first verse in Spanish, read the rest in English with music in the background.)

Gracias a la vida que ma ha dado tanto  
Me dio dos luceros que cuando los abro  
Perfecto distingo lo negro del blanco,  
Y en el alto cielo su fondo estrellado  
Y en las multitudes una amiga que yo amo.

Thanks to life that has given me so much.  
It has given me laughter, it has given me tears.  
With them I can tell joy and pain,  
The two things that make up my song,  
And your song that is everyone's song,  
that is my own song.

## Reflection

Surrounded by the harvest we ask: What have I harvested this year? How do I say thanks to life? Let's pause to think about these questions and then share our reflections with each other. (sharing)

**Song Refrain:** "Let The Women Be There"



## Presentation of Bread

Just as there is no one woman's spirit that symbolizes all of creation, so there is no one bread or drink that symbolizes the diversity and power of women. We bless three breads—corn, pumpkin and wheat—and three drinks—milk, cider and wine. We express gratitude for our harvests by sharing them. With the Hopi we thank Mother Corn for her bountiful gifts. She is the promise of food and life.

(Three people present the breads and drinks by carrying them to the center, speaking the words, and placing them on the table.)

I bring corn bread to our table to symbolize Mother Corn. She is the promise of food and life. Let this corn bread remind us to give back what we have received.

I bring pumpkin bread to our table. Let it represent women's gifts and the new life that springs up when we share them in solidarity.

I bring wheat bread to our table. It is a common bread. Let it remind us that women are as common as a common loaf of bread and we are rising!

## Blessing of Bread

Let us extend our hands, palms up, and pray.

Blessed are you, Sustenance of all Life. We give you thanks for the breads we break and eat. They come from the fruits of the harvest, symbol of the fullness and ripeness of Autumn. We thank you for the ripeness of women we have known: middle age women, women who speak out in wisdom against all that holds us back from fullness. May women be filled with life.

## Presentation of Drinks

I bring milk to our table today to remember the children. It is women's milk that nurtures and feeds all generations. Let this milk remind us of our responsibility to pass faith on to the next generation.

I bring cider to our table today to celebrate the earth and this season of harvest. The apple is good and women are holy. Let it remind us of the harvest and goodness of all women.

I bring wine to our table today to remember the joy of women's spirits and the power of our sexuality and spirituality. Let this wine represent the ebb and flow of women's cycles.

## Blessing of Drinks

Let us extend our hands, palms up, and pray.

Blessed are you, Lover of All. We give you thanks for the cups we drink. They came from the fruits of summer. We thank you for the passion and joy of women we have known: young women, women-children and adolescents, women who dance out their spirit and celebrate all that yearns in us for completion. May women be filled with joy.

## Eating and Drinking

Let us eat these breads and drink these cups remembering that we do this in memory of all women. Let us come to the table several at a time to share this food as a sign of our solidarity with one another and as a symbol of the fullness of our womanhood.

**Song Refrain:** "Let the Women Be There"

## Litany of Leavetaking

The time of saying goodbye is here. This day we have shared our stories, and celebrated our harvests. As we close, let us leave one another with a word or phrase that is our blessing for this time together. Let us speak our name and our word. (Sharing)

**Song:** "Woyaya," traditional South African  
As taught by Ysaye Barnwell of Sweet Honey in the Rock

(Begin a spiral dance and sing the song until all are spiraled back into a circle.)

We are going Heaven knows where  
We are going we know within  
And we'll get there Heaven knows how  
We will get there; We know we will.  
It will be hard we know  
And the road will be muddy and rough  
But we'll get there Heaven knows how  
We will get there; We know we will.

## Greeting of Peace

Let us embrace one another warmly to open our circle and give thanks for the time we have shared.

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

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## Tea and Empathy

What a wonderfully receptive, responsive, creative readership you are! The Tea Ritual of Thanksgiving (plus tea bag) which we sent out not quite a year ago brought such a return infusion of warmth, cheer and good ideas that we'd like to share a sampling with you.

*From Joan Boegel in Pennsylvania:*

What a delight...! May I have ten more copies to send to my daughters and friends? (I'll supply the tea bags.) How often I have said to them in my letters: Now make a cup of tea, put your feet up and read this. Your work and WATERwheel is inspiring.

*From Judy Poinsett Nelson in Virginia:*

I want you to know how I used the "cup of tea" celebration that you sent. I invited my sharing group of seven women to the house before Christmas and gave each a copy of the writing and a cup of tea. We read it together. It was very powerful to each of us. Thank you!

*From Ruth Nicklett in Illinois:*

One of the best fundraisers I've ever seen!

*From Mary Wallace in Texas:*

Thank you...the tea ritual provided a much-needed respite from the other rituals of the season--shopping, wrapping, baking, decorating--which have been for me hollow symbols of my servitude. Thank you for reminding me that I am valuable. And thank you for the work that you do. It is important for me as I struggle to find hope in this season.

*From Anne Murray in California:*

The cup of tea was a marvelous idea. I had no intention of giving again, but your card was so nice and the tea idea bordering on brilliant...

*From Renee LaFontain in Michigan:*

...Going to the mail and opening this lovely gift was absolutely heartwarming...Imagine, in the midst of financial woes, family problems and school worries, here comes a beautiful prayer and words of friendship shared over tea...Thank you so much for this moment--it helped me to put a few things in better perspective in light of this season...I fully intend to share this holy moment of prayer and tea with many others... long after the holidays are over.

*From WATER:* If you've misplaced your "tea ritual," or didn't receive one last year, let us know so you can join us for a soothing cup and a healing prayer. Meanwhile, we welcome your continuing support and "constant comment."

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## Women Crossing Worlds

### ...In Latin America

Judith Plaskow, author of *Standing Again at Sinai*, co-editor of several anthologies, and editor of the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, lectured in Buenos Aires, Argentina on "Spirituality and Jewish Feminist Theology." The program was sponsored by WATER and La Urdimbre de Aquehua, our sister group in Argentina. Sara Newbery, WATER staff member, coordinated the event, which was held at the Prensa Ecumenica.

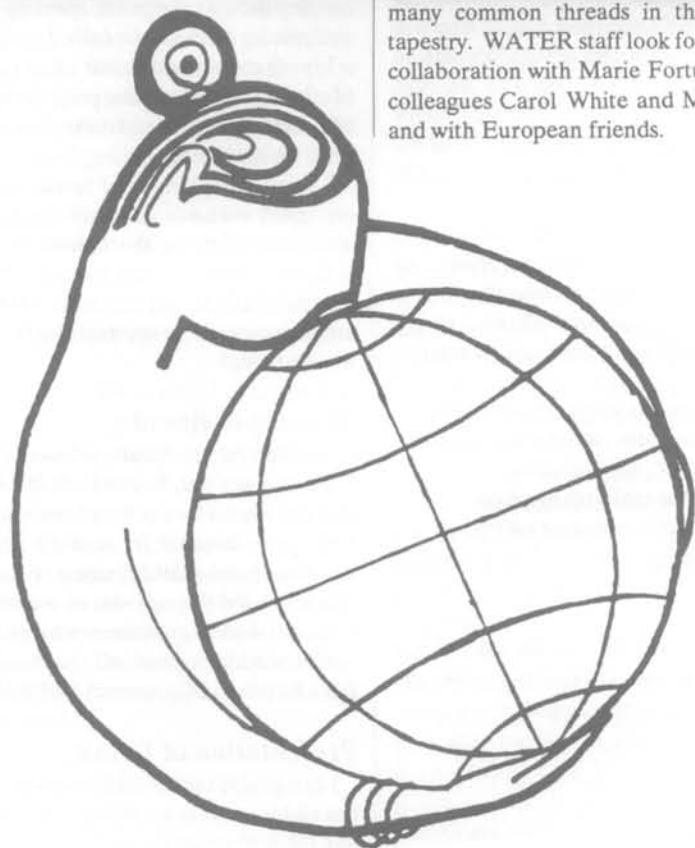
Participants found Judith's presentation insightful and her topic challenging. They expressed a desire for more such *intercambios* in the future, both with Judith and other colleagues. WATER is delighted to sponsor such events. We are always anxious to hear of North American friends going south and Latin American friends coming north so that we can facilitate the exchange. Judy Ress in Chile is trying to coordinate such a network, and a new group, the *Asociacion de Teologas y Pastoras de America Latina y El Caribe*, is in formation. WATER supports both efforts.

### ...In Europe

WATER staff Diann Neu and Mary Hunt joined the Rev. Marie Marshall Fortune for a workshop at the international Grail center, De Tiltenberg, in The Netherlands this summer. Participants looked at "A Feminist Theology of Friendship and New Perspectives on Sexual Violence." Marie Fortune is director of the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence in Seattle, WA, and author of several books, including *Is Nothing Sacred?* dealing with clergy sexual abuse.

The workshop was co-sponsored by the Grail, the Catholic Bureau for Education and Guidance on Sexuality and Relationship (KBSR), and the Protestant Foundation for Education and Formation regarding Relationships and Sexuality (PSVG).

Issues raised included the power of friendship to cope with violence, roots of violence in the Christian tradition, resources to eradicate violence, pastoral needs of women who have survived violence, and liturgical creativity that can be helpful in dealing with and preventing violence. Women from Germany, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands and the U.S. discovered many common threads in this complicated tapestry. WATER staff look forward to future collaboration with Marie Fortune, with Grail colleagues Carol White and Mimi Marechal, and with European friends.



# Resources



Try some of the following for new insights and challenging ideas. All of these titles are now in the WATER Resource Center.

Amott, Teresa and Julie Matthaei. **RACE, GENDER, AND WORK: A MULTI-CULTURAL ECONOMIC HISTORY OF WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES.** Boston: South End Press, 1991 (433 pages, \$40).

Indispensable information for understanding how the system works and why it should be changed.

Berne, Patricia H. and Louis M. Savary. **DREAM SYMBOL WORK: UNLOCKING THE ENERGY FROM DREAMS AND SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES.** Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1991 (165 pages, \$11.95).

This is an ambitious project with some very practical exercises for accomplishing it.

Braude, Ann. **RADICAL SPIRITS: SPIRITUALISM AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN NINETEENTH CENTURY AMERICA.** Boston: Beacon Press, 1989 (268 pages, \$12.95).

Who says life ends with death, ouija boards don't work, and women ought to stay at home? Ann Braude explores some important roots of contemporary feminist spirituality.

Brown, Elisabeth Pott and Susan Mosher Stuard, editors. **WITNESS FOR CHANGE: QUAKER WOMEN OVER THREE CENTURIES.** New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989 (190 pages, \$9.95).

Early religious feminists provide useful orientation to those who follow. This book is a wonderful example of feminist church history.

Butler, Becky, editor. **CEREMONIES OF THE HEART: CELEBRATING LESBIAN UNIONS.** Seattle, WA: The Seal Press, 1990 (305 pages, \$14.95).

Covenants, commitments, holy unions, weddings are all ways in which many lesbian couples share their love. Stories and sample liturgies make this a versatile volume.

Craighead, Meinrad. **THE LITANY OF THE GREAT RIVER.** Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1991 (80 pages, \$18.95).

Original art with insightful writing that brings together Catholic and Native American themes, nature and spirit in a unique synthesis.

Falk, Marcia. **THE SONG OF SONGS: A NEW TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION.** San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1990 (213 pages, \$18.95).

A beautiful book about a beautiful book. The translation is enticing and the commentary insightful.

Glaser, Chris. **COMING OUT TO GOD: PRAYERS FOR LESBIANS AND GAY MEN, THEIR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS.** Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991 (144 pages, \$8.95).

Sensitive, well written Christian prayers suitable for many occasions, but especially helpful when oppression and AIDS obscure hope.

Jelin, Elisabeth, editor. **WOMEN AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN LATIN AMERICA.** London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1990 (226 pages, \$8.95).

Essays on women and social change in Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Chile and Brazil. Women are making a real difference and this book shows how.

Lerman, Hannah and Natalie Porter. **FEMINIST ETHICS IN PSYCHOTHERAPY.** New York: Springer Publishing Company (267 pages, \$36.95).

The issues are complex but so is the analysis. A welcome discussion in a field where the mines are deep.

Maltz, Wendy. **THE SEXUAL HEALING JOURNEY: A GUIDE FOR SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE.** New York: HarperCollins, 1991 (347 pages, \$19.95).

This is a comprehensive guide to the myriad issues surrounding abuse, and a good start for getting beyond them.

Mercadante, Linda A. **GENDER, DOCTRINE AND GOD: THE SHAKERS AND CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY.** Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990 (195 pages, \$10.95).

As feminine imagery for the divine gains ground, lessons from the Shaker community's efforts prove helpful.

Milhaven, Annie Lally. **SERMONS SELDOM HEARD: WOMEN PROCLAIM THEIR LIVES.** New York: Crossroad, 1991 (264 pages, \$15.95).

Depression, life in prison, rape, incest, lesbian love, "blessed singleness," retirement are not ordinary Sunday fare. Contributors, including Frances Kissling, Mary Hunt and Darlene Nicgorski, show how feminist/womanist/mujerista theology can be articulated in affirming, empowering ways.

Noble, Vicki. **SHAKTI WOMAN: FEELING OUR FIRE, HEALING OUR WORLD.** San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991 (255 pages, \$14.95).

Shamanic healing is largely unexplored in the West. This study provides key concepts and inspiring illustrations.

Patton, Cindy. **INVENTING AIDS.** New York: Routledge, 1990 (171 pages, \$13.95).

Illness as metaphor, a la Susan Sontag, is advanced by this insightful treatment of the language and imagery surrounding AIDS and the AIDS service industry.

Stein, Diane, editor. **THE GODDESS CELEBRATES: AN ANTHOLOGY OF WOMEN'S RITUALS.** Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1991 (259 pages, \$12.95).

Rituals and commentaries sure to spur others to join in the fun and profundity of Goddess religion.

Wallace, Michele. **INVISIBILITY BLUES: FROM POP TO THEORY.** New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, 1990 (267 pages, \$15.95).

This cultural study in black feminism is an important contribution to an important conversation.

Wire, Antoinette Clark. **THE CORINTHIAN WOMEN PROPHETS: A RECONSTRUCTION THROUGH PAUL'S RHETORIC.** Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990 (316 pages, \$17.95).

A technical treatment of women which explains how and why Paul's contribution is so complex.



# Women-Church Convergence Plans Conference

The Women-Church Convergence, sponsor of the popular "Women-Church: Claiming Our Power" (Cincinnati, 1987) and "Women Church Speaks" (Chicago, 1983), is planning its next gathering. The group has taken seriously the need to develop the planning process, as well as the event, in a multi-cultural, multi-racial way.

In order to do this the Convergence has developed an inclusive process that will lead to the actual shaping of the conference. Rather than simply relying on a representational committee, it has decided to gather small, diverse groups of women in living rooms and around kitchen tables throughout the United States. These groups are invited to send feedback to the Convergence committee on: issues, priorities, conference location, time of year (targeted date: 1993), style of conference (i.e. input, field trips, training), and related matters.

The success of this project depends on the participation of many groups of women all over the country. WATER is happy to make the necessary materials available to anyone who sends a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Women-Church Conference Process c/o WATER, 8035 13th Street, Silver Spring, MD 20910. We will also be very happy to talk with representatives of local groups who want ideas on how to go about forming such groups. Please activate your group and be a part of the next collective moment in the life of the U.S. Women-Church movement.

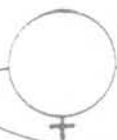
## WANTED:

Are you a member of a women-church base community? WATER is asked often about women-church base communities around the country and throughout the world. We want to know how many there are, where they are and how many people participate in them. We continue to collect such data. If you are a member of a group or know of a group, please share this information with WATER by contacting Diann Neu, 8035 13th Street, Silver Spring, MD 20910 phone

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## Complimentary

To share with a friend

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*WATERwheel Summer/Fall 1991*