



# water wheel

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

## Editorial

Violence increases in the name of religious belief. Another doctor slain because he performs legal abortions, a clinic volunteer dead too, and another widow left to ponder what god/ess motivates such insanity. The twisted theology of a recalcitrant minister with a gun adds urgency to our work.

So many people in our Alliance find meaning and purpose in small communities. Their periodic gatherings for celebrations, discussions, shared meals, quiet times together make for simple community which seems more than adequate. It makes one wonder whether religion ever has to be big business. A local church in Washington just announced the building of a sanctuary for \$13 million cash sans mortgage. How much is too much?

Churches' efforts to be global which so often result in religious imperialism trouble the soul. The small-scale, group-to-group approach seems so much more mutually respectful. We find it happens organically as people, mostly women, from various countries meet one another, drop by, send a note, share a resource, modify a liturgy. E-mail and faxes help, lending a certain elitism even to the small-scale approach, but it feels more grounded than grandiose.

We are currently pursuing ways to network with Latin American women to share resources in theological education. Watch this space for details, but be confident that it will be more like the base groups than a diploma mill, more like a spiral than a pyramid. No bullet proof vests here yet, but change is still a dangerous job.



## Sexual Integrity

by Mary E. Hunt

Experts wax poetic about sexual orientation, sexual preference, sexual identity, even though no one really knows how heterosexual people get to be the way they are, what makes bisexual people tick, and how homosexual people arrive at their situation. Are these choices we all make, choices a few of us make, things over which we have no control, results of nature or nurture, biology or destiny? The frank and scientific fact of the matter is that no one knows, and anyone who makes definitive claims at this point also has a large bridge in Brooklyn which you can buy for a song.

I suggest that we switch the conversation to something about which we know, or at least can know, a great deal, namely, sexual integrity. I believe it is a constructive alternative to all of the above and more, and that it has the potential to ground renewed sexual ethics on a level play-

sexual orientation be used to increase the celebration and affirmation of same-sex love and sexual diversity, for example? In your dreams.

We do, however, know a great deal about discrimination and prejudice. It is based on well documented, meticulously researched, first person accounts of just how cruel the world, and especially religious groups, can be if one does not conform to their much-touted norms. Ask a gay teenager, a lesbian mother, or a cross-dressing truck driver. Ask virtually anyone outside of nirvana who has ever had a same-sex fantasy, much less a lifelong relationship with an honest to goodness person of the same gender. With a tiny margin of error, most will usually recount personal instances of discrimination, ridicule, ostracism, or out and out violence.

This is not just street stuff. It goes on in places that allege to be about morals. Tune in to the

*... it is integrity, not preference, orientation or identity, with which we ought to be concerned.*

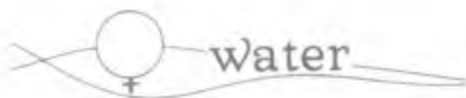
ing field. It also has the potential to frame the right questions, even if the right answers are elusive.

Of course there are some things we know, both biological and social, about human loving, albeit with slim evidence and debatable studies. We know that statistically most people are heterosexual, though as Kinsey and others make clear, the percentage of people, especially men, who have same-sex experiences is upwards of thirty percent. The size of the hypothalamus of gay men, the high percentage of fraternal twins who are both heterosexual or both homosexual, and other biological studies have attracted media attention. So far they prove little.

The Human Genome Project and its resultant race to map every intricate millimeter of us and those who will come after us on the basis of those who have gone before us promise some answers to questions which today are still too speculative to pin down. But will a biological basis for

vicious debates at the highest ecclesial levels for a sample. When the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches discussed violence against women it could not agree to condemn violence against lesbian women. What causes church officials to act in so heinous a way might be a good research subject. Or, try the National Council of Churches of the U.S.A. on the petitioned membership of the Metropolitan Community Church, and hear some of the most remarkable debate on record, all predicated on something about which we still know precious little, and all argued by representatives of denominations that have plenty of lesbian/gay/bisexual and transgendered members.

I do not claim to have the final word on the subject. But I propose that we re-situate the conversation so that everyone can participate on an equal footing without needing to rely on data which is debatable at best, laughable at worst. I  
(Continued on next page)



ISSN 0898-6606

Vol. 7, No. 3, Fall 1994

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WATER is a feminist 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 doing programs, projects, publications, workshops, retreats, counseling and liturgical planning which have helped thousands of people to be a part of an inclusive church and society.

WATERwheel is published quarterly by the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual. Annual subscription, \$35. Address inquiries to the WATER office. Additional copies of this issue can be ordered for \$5 each. Complimentary copies are available on request for conferences, seminars, classes or discussion groups. Include street address and daytime telephone number of the person ordering materials. Send inquiries and comments to:

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## Integrity *(continued from page 1)*

suggest that we leave aside all of the loaded empty categories above, and try "sexual integrity" for a change. Let all come to the table assuming that even their most dreaded opponents are trying to live with integrity. I propose that talking about integrity will elevate the conversation. It will prove that when confronted with new criteria, namely, how well we love, the one who is perfect can cast the first stone.

By using "sexual integrity" I mean to sidestep the still unanswerable questions of why people love as they do, and move on to what we do know, namely, that most people do the best they can to love well. Insofar as our best is usually not good enough, we speak of the fallible human condition. But insofar as it is often quite enough to sustain human community and invite human greatness, I observe that it is integrity, not preference, orientation or identity, with which we ought to be concerned.

I say this as one who has suffered the consequences of honesty about being a lesbian in a homo-hating society, but also as a student of human diversity who has observed my own and my friends' changes. Even in an age of unprecedented research and discussion on things sexual, the paucity of our knowledge compels me to recommend an abundance of benefit of the doubt. Just as I do not know why puppy dogs have tails, neither do I know what compels some women and some men to love one another, men's legendary oppression of women notwith-

fertilization, and the widespread notion that sexual activity is a human right not a heterosexual privilege. What has taken the place of procreation as the *raison d'être* for sex is pleasure in the context of mutual love. Ethicists shy away from pleasure as an unmitigated good, as if pleasure and hedonism were synonymous. I believe that it is time to see pleasure as a human right, not something for which anyone needs to apologize unless, of course, it is used to limit someone else's. Pleasure in mutual love encompasses the communication, reciprocal responsibility, growth and justice-seeking that make up healthy relationships.

Debate on the ethics of these elements continues to rage, but the bottom line is that the tide has turned from the heterosexually-headed, several-children-and-a-pet nuclear family to a range of living situations including same-sex partners, people in communities, single adults, children with one parent and virtually any permutation one can imagine. This is the context of contemporary ethics.

The problem is that religions, especially Christian churches, are slow unto refusing to catch up. Ethics is a renewable human resource which each generation revisits according to its contours. In our time, I suggest that things have not gotten so out of hand as the right would have it, nor are all things imaginable permissible as some libertarians would have it. Rather, we need new ways to think about how things are and how they should be. This is dicey at a time when backlash dictates that every change in the ethical

## *Ethics is a renewable human resource which each generation revisits according to its contours.*

standing. But I do know that some of them manage to do it with integrity—I have seen it in my own family—and it is that which I want to explore and emulate. Likewise, I do not know what makes some women love other women, nor some men other men, especially when the social costs are astronomical. But as an ethicist, indeed as a person trying to live an ethically good life, I concern myself with the quality of the love, not with the relational constellation of the lovers. I believe that this approach holds the key to the future of the common good.

Procreation as part of the natural order was the major argument for the normativity of heterosexuality. But now sex is an everyday occurrence (assuming of course that it is exercised safely, with mutual consent, and without scaring the horses), and procreation is a once or twice in a lifetime experience. This is due to a convergence of factors: population concerns, in vitro

arena invites danger, but it is essential if we are to move off the dime on sexual ethics.

People who seek to live ethically seem to have two choices in the face of backlash. Either we can set a variety of standards of what constitutes "right relation" for people according to their circumstances, or we can hold everyone to a single standard which is predicated on the mores of the majority. Neither of these are inviting options to me because they are based on the dubious ethical notion that difference determines how one will live, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, that the norm will always be unattainable to those who do not conform to its preconditions. For instance, if marriage is the norm, those who do not marry, whether homosexually or heterosexually, are somehow profligate.

I have argued in *Fierce Tenderness: A Feminist Theology of Friendship* (Crossroad, 1991) *(Continued on the next page)*

that friendship is the appropriate norm for mature relationships. While I think that is a step in the right direction, I am now prepared to go one more step, namely, to call for sexual integrity as a substitute for concerns about orientation, identity and preference. This is prompted by the many "unknowns" in the field, but also by the testimonies of so many people who, when faced with the "why" questions: why did you divorce John, why do you love Susan, why must you cross dress, why do you want to be celibate, all come up with the same, abstract, intuitive kinds of answer: "I had to for myself," "I just do," "It's me," "I feel at one with myself." In response, little more than "Thank you for explaining it to me" can be said without being intrusive or ungrateful for the honesty. This is taking individuals seriously as we develop communal norms. Critical questions must follow,

*A culture riddled by violence prevents integrity,  
making it practically impossible  
for some people to love at all.*

but at least we need to hear integrity when it is offered.

The obvious problem is what to do when the same answers come up to questions like "Why do you, a man 40 years old, like to have sex with 12 year olds?" or "Why did you rape her?" But the important difference is that these are experiences to which no one can claim the right because they are clear violations of the mutuality and consent conditions which I believe ground "good," that is, morally good as well as pleasurable, sex in the context of mutual love. Such answers are rightly rejected as inadequate, equivocating, making excuses for behaviors for which no one can claim integrity.

Put positively, imagine how helpful it would be to cease and desist the kind of ethical posturing which is based on whether heterosexuality or homosexuality is a choice or not. Does it make an ethical difference if in fact the bottom line is that good things flow from the relationship, people are nurtured, the world is a safer, happier place, energies for justice work are harnessed? Integrity has a dynamic of its own, a sense of wholeness and certitude that is obvious, albeit only on careful examination. It has both an individual dimension--I feel whole--and a communal dimension--people tell me I seem whole.

A culture riddled by violence prevents integrity, making it practically impossible for some people to love at all. For example, I think about the ways in which the U.S. military is structured. A love affair between two people of the same gender in the Marines is the closest thing to a

modern day miracle I can imagine. But it happens, despite the odds, when people seek integrity and have the courage to act on it. What needs changing is not the people but the "don't ask, don't tell" policy which translates into "don't be whole, don't be honest."

Sexual integrity can sound like a contemporary effort to essentialize ethics as if one could measure integrity with a moral yardstick. But the mere fact that it is hard to get a hold on integrity, that most people recognize it when they see it even if they do not always like what they see, argues for trying. I think of so many parents of lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered children who, on learning their offspring's situations, often respond with something like "At least you told us," and "We hope you're happy." Of course many responses are far more vicious. Many negative reactions are based on the fact

that parents have been lied to in the past. The positive reactions usually have to do with respecting integrity rather than trying to solve the mysteries of love. If the parents themselves were faced with questions about their own lives and love, most would have no empirical answers.

This gives me hope that the shared search for integrity might help us out of the morass, especially in churches and other religious settings where ill-informed perspectives about little known data serve as the shaky foundation for discrimination. It is certainly more interesting to figure out how people find and maintain their integrity, and encourage it to happen than to micro-manage what makes people tick. After all, human beings are not clocks. We yearn for sexual integrity.

### Study Questions

1. Name several examples of people living with sexual integrity.
2. How does your community acknowledge and encourage sexual integrity?
3. How has your own sexual integrity deepened?

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



## Water Ways Down Under

*by Carol Scinto*

The response, when I called (rather hesitantly, not wanting to be a bother), echoed all the way to Silver Spring. "We've been waiting for you!" exclaimed Rosemary Neave from the book-crowded office where she coordinates the Women's Resource Centre in Auckland. Within the hour she was on the doorstep of the Scintos' temporary abode, bearing introductions, invitations, directions, information, questions and answers, topped off with an exuberant welcoming hug.

And that's the way it is when you're traveling under the sign of WATER.

During our six months "down under" on a test run of my husband Joe's retirement, he and I were graced with special blessings stemming from our WATER connections--hospitable people brimming with wit, warmth and wisdom.

Some we'd met already: Susan Adams, Anglican priest (see Resources for a review of her recent book) and John Salmon, her Methodist minister spouse, two Kiwi activists extraordinary, who were in the U.S. last year on a short study program; the Melbourne Terrific Trio, Gwen Benjamin, Coralie Ling and Christine Fensham of Australia's Uniting Church, who visited Washington last fall and in return took us well in hand to demonstrate the delights of their beautiful city; and two Wonder Women I first encountered at Casa Sofia in Chile in 1991, Monica Hingston and Peg Moran, who are now doing their good works in Oz.

Others we met for the first time, to be engulfed in a tide of hospitality purely on our standing as emissaries of Mary Hunt and Diann Neu: the aforementioned Rosemary, and Beryl Turner of the Centre; Meryl and Gini and other members of Spiral, an ecumenical reconciling community of women and men in Auckland who "affirm religious agency and live for justice;" Janet Scarfe of Melbourne, who was Australian delegate to the recent Church of England ordination of its first woman priest; Jean Gledhill of Sydney, coordinator of the Australian Council of Churches "Living Under the Southern Cross" conference of 1993 at which Mary Hunt was a key speaker; and Theresa Angert-Quilter, an American on temporary assignment in Auckland from her permanent home in Sydney, who helped foater introductions.

Lo, the ripples widen! We are well-connected.

*Carol Scinto is WATER's Editorial Assistant and a long-time volunteer in the office.*



## Background

A rite of Coming Out needs to be celebrated in every country corner and city center of the world, because lesbian women and gay men live everywhere.

Coming out is both a one-time event and a lifetime process. Once someone says out loud to herself or to someone else that she is lesbian, she is always choosing to tell her story again and again. Living as an openly lesbian, gay or bisexual person in this historical time means going against heterosexual norms and often encountering people who just don't understand. Yet, ironically, coming out--and living out--means coming home. It says "I am who I am."

This ritual celebrates coming out and being out. It is written for a lesbian coming out, but can easily be changed for a gay male or bisexual coming out, or a joint lesbian and gay coming out. Use it as a model for the one you or friends need to celebrate.

## Preparation

Buy a lavender candle, chimes, water pitcher and basket that will be given as gifts to the person coming out. Gather a bowl for the water, an evergreen branch to sprinkle water, a loaf of bread, a glass of wine and a glass of juice. Place these on a central altar table that is covered with a special cloth.

## Name the Circle

We are here to celebrate \_\_\_\_\_'s (name of the person) coming out and living out. Congratulations, \_\_\_\_\_, for knowing yourself and for telling others who you are.

Let us create our circle of support by each in turn speaking our names, acknowledging our support of \_\_\_\_\_ (name of the person), and giving our hand to the person next to us as a sign of that support. (Sharing.)

\_\_\_\_\_, feel the love and support of this circle of friends and family. (Raise the joined hands.) Remember it when times are tough, and some days they will be. We love you. We sing our support.

**Song:** "Good For the World," by Holly Near, adapted by Diann L. Neu

Good for the world for coming out (3x)

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When we come out it's good for the world.

Good for the world for opening doors...  
Good for the world for telling the truth...  
Good for the world for sharing support...

## Bless the Four Elements

Let us bless the elements of the universe--fire, air, water and earth--for they have called home to the world our friend \_\_\_\_\_.

(Four blessers, in turn, bless four elements.)

### Blesser of Fire: South

(The blesser walks to the center-south and lights a candle on the altar.)

Source of Fire,  
O Searing Flame,  
Fill \_\_\_\_\_'s heart and all our hearts with a spark of passion.

Empower us and every lesbian, gay and bisexual person with courage to emerge from cocoons of hibernation and isolation.

Release our imaginations from their hiding places.

Guiding Light,

Fire of Justice,

One Who brings Us Home.

Amen. Blessed be. Let it be so.

### Blesser of Air: East

(The blesser walks to the center-east and plays the chimes on the altar.)

Source of Air,  
O Whispering Wind,  
Fill \_\_\_\_\_'s lungs and all our lungs with the breath of healing.

Blow away the staleness.

Bring freshness into our lives.

Gentle Breeze,

Rustling Sound,

One Who brings Us Home.

Amen. Blessed be. Let it be so.

### Blesser of Water: West

(The blesser walks to the center-west, pours water into the bowl, and sprinkles participants with the evergreen branch.)

Source of Water,  
Ever-bubbling spring,  
Fill \_\_\_\_\_'s being and all our beings with emotions that flow freely.

Wash away the hurts and pains of all oppressed people.

Quench our thirst for spiritual and sexual connection.

Ocean Womb,

# Coming Out:

by Diann L. Neu

Wellspring of Life,  
One Who brings Us Home.  
Amen. Blessed be. Let it be so.

### Blesser of Earth: North

(The blesser walks to the center-north and places a basket of bread on the altar.)

Source of Earth,  
Mother of Our Being,  
Fill \_\_\_\_\_'s body and all our bodies with courage for loving one another.

Cradle and protect us as we discover our real selves.

Enlighten us with dreams, visions and inner wisdom.

Sacred Ground,

Fertile Soil,

One Who brings Us Home.

Amen. Blessed be. Let it be so.

**Chant:** "The Earth, the Air, the Fire, the Water," Source Unknown, recorded on Libana, A Circle Is Cast, c 1986.

The earth, the air, the fire, the water  
Return, return, return, return (2x).

I-A, I-A, I-A, I-A, I-O, I-O, I-O, I-O (2x).

**Reading:** "Invisible for Too Long,"  
by Diann L. Neu

For a very long time I have wanted to reach out to you in solidarity, to work with you to transform injustice...

but I have been invisible for too long.

**Response: Come out, come out,  
wherever you are!**

I work next to you in so many places. I am the doctor who comforted your dying mother. I am the teacher of your nine-year-old daughter. I am the therapist who helped you free yourself...

but I have been invisible for too long.

**Response: Come out, come out,  
wherever you are!**

I stand beside you in so many places. I am the minister who marched next to you as we advocated for a woman's right to choose. I am the nun who works at the women's shelter where you volunteer. I am the social worker at the mental health center who works with your sister...

but I have been invisible for too long.

**Response: Come out, come out,  
wherever you are!**

# Coming Home

I am your invisible sister, your invisible brother. I have been invisible for too long. I yearn to be known for who I am. As you come out, you give me courage.

I yearn to be visible.

**Response:** Come out, come out,  
wherever you are!

## Tell the Story of Coming Out

\_\_\_\_ (name), you have listened to this call. You have chosen to be visible. Tell us your story of coming out. *(The person who is coming out and living out shares her story with the participants.)*

## Honor the Person

Thank you, \_\_\_\_\_, for trusting us enough to share your life with us. We respect you. We honor you. We support and affirm you. *(Participants respond by sharing words of support and affirmation.)*

And, we would like to honor you with a few mementos.

\_\_\_\_, this candle *(hold the one from the altar)* symbolizes your passion for truth. When you burn it, and every candle, reignite this spark. *(Give her the candle.)*

\_\_\_\_, these chimes *(play them)* symbolize the unique melody that is yours. When you play them, remember your powerful story. *(Give her the chimes.)*

\_\_\_\_, this water pitcher *(hold the one from the altar)* symbolizes the deep well that you are. When you pour water from it, feel your pains and hurts wash away. *(Give her the water pitcher.)*

\_\_\_\_, this basket of bread *(hold the one from the altar)* symbolizes the nourishment that you

are to us and to others you meet. When you use this basket, visualize the many ways you fill others with your love. *(Give her the basket.)*

*(Other words are spoken and gifts given.)*

## Litany of Thanksgiving

Gracious God and Loving Goddess, we praise you for creating \_\_\_\_\_ a lesbian. We praise you for creating us your lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and heterosexual people.

For bringing us out of our closets and into full life...

**Response:** We praise you.

For embracing us with your love and care...

For giving us a company of friends and a family of choice...

For teaching us that our sexuality is a gift for the community...

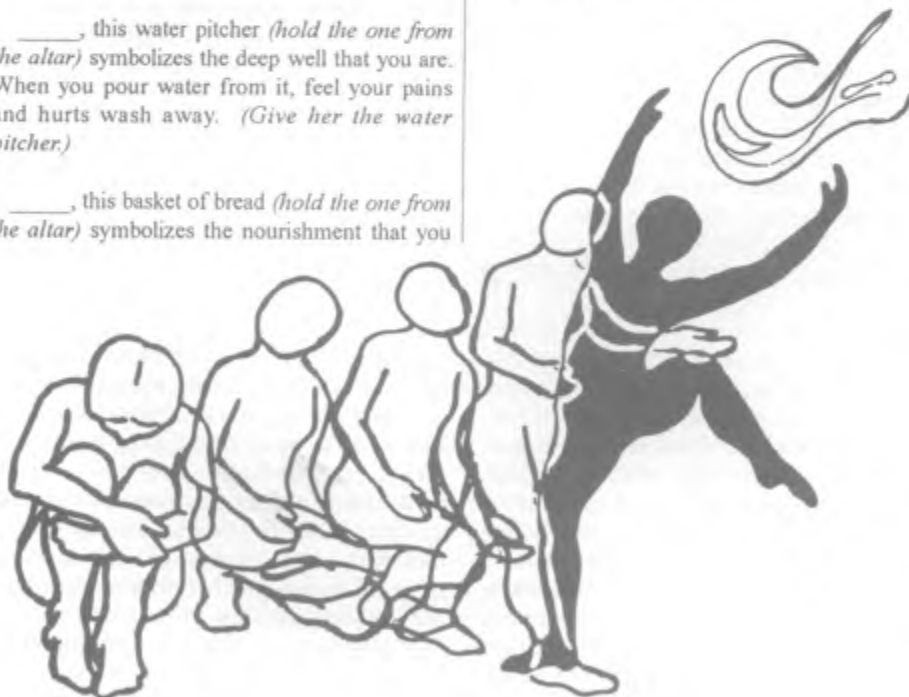
For strengthening us to cope with misunderstanding, fear, and hatred...

For helping us break through the heterosexism and homophobia in ourselves, our families and friends, our culture and society, our churches and synagogues...

For enlightening us with dreams of holy impatience...

*(Add others)*

Gracious God and Loving Goddess, we praise you for creating \_\_\_\_\_ a lesbian. We praise you for creating us your people.



## Bless the Bread

*(The person who has come out holds the bread and prays:)*

Blessed are you, Holy Lover, for nourishing us and bringing us home.

## Bless the Fruit of the Vine

*(A close friend holds glasses of wine and juice and prays:)*

Blessed are you, Gracious Source, for quenching our thirst and bringing us home.

## Bless the Festive Meal

*(Another friend extends her hands over the food and prays:)*

Blessed are you, Nourishing Mother, for giving us friends to feed our hunger and bringing us home.

**Song:** "We're Coming Home," by Carolyn McDade, c 1991 Carolyn McDade.

*(Refrain)*

We're coming home to the spirit in our souls.  
We're coming home and the healing makes us whole.

Like rivers running to the sea,  
We're coming home, we're coming home.

As the day is woven into night,  
As the darkness lives within the light,  
As we open vision to new sight,  
We're coming home, we're coming home.

Bearing words new unto each day,  
Speaking bold where only silence lay  
As we dare to rise and lead the way,  
We're coming home, we're coming home.

To create a world of joy and peace  
Where the power of justice does release  
Love abounding, wars forever cease,  
We're coming home, we're coming home.

## Greet with Peace

Today, \_\_\_\_\_ has come out and come home. We have each come home. Filled with the spirit of this resting place, let us embrace one another in love. *(Greeting.)*

## Share a Festive Meal

Let us share our festive meal. *(Eating, drinking and dancing.)*

*Diann L. Neu, M.Div., STM, MSW, feminist liturgist and therapist, is co-founder and co-director of WATER. This liturgy is published in Equal Rites: Lesbian and Gay Liturgy Ceremonies and Celebrations, edited by Kittredge Cherry and Zalmon O. Sherman, Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994.*



## In Memory of Her

*From Genevieve D. Chavez, Las Cruces, NM:*

In memory of my mother, **Ann Chavez**, whose commitment was to her family and her friends. She loved to do for others, and her faith, though quiet, was profound.

*From Kathleen Hirsch, Olney, MD:*

In memory of **Shawn Sheffield**, who in his very short life touched many people and taught many lessons. As I cling to my own children I think of him and his precious mothers.

*From Renate Rose, Cavite, The Philippines:*

In memory of **Shirley Holz**, radical, true and courageous friend whom we all loved and admired.

## Oops - and Thanks

An attentive reader clarifies the historical record: the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) was founded on October 6, 1968--before Stonewall, not after, contrary to Mary Hunt's chronology in "Stonewall 1994" in the summer issue of **WATERwheel**. But, writes a forgiving Virginia Miles of Reston, VA, "thanks for all your good work. I enjoy your publication very much." We are enrolling Mary in a short course of Remedial History.

## Postscript...

Spring may have been a little late this year, compliments of the U.S. Postal Service. If your Vol.7, No.1 (Spring) issue of **WATERwheel** arrived sometime after the Dog Days of August, consider it a miraculous mailing, survivor of the DC postal system's latest misadventure with automation (bags of mail dumped in a back room and almost forgotten).

Our thanks to you faithful supporters still responding with donations in commemoration of **WATER**'s tenth anniversary, as highlighted in that resurrected mailing.

# Bravo Brasil, Viva el Cono Sur

by Mary E. Hunt

A month in Brazil is but a taste. But what a taste it was when in August I taught a seminar on ethics, with a focus on reproductive rights, at the Ecumenical Post Graduate Institute in the Science of Religion (IEPG) in Sao Bernardo do Campo just outside of Sao Paulo. I was there at the invitation of the women of NETMAL, the Nucleus of Women Theological Students in Latin America, who are supported by the Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church and the Global Fund for Women. NETMAL's new theological journal, **Mandragora**, is a wonderful vehicle for learning from them. Contact **WATER** for information on how to subscribe or exchange.

The seminar was rigorous, perhaps moreso for me than for the students, as we communicated in Spanish and Portuguese about issues made all the more urgent by the up-coming Brazilian elections, the U.N. Population Conference in Cairo and the suffering of women in a country in which reproductive options are severely limited due to institutional church influences. We teased out everything from contraception to RU-486, from in vitro fertilization to AIDS, from sex education to condoms.

Lectures at the Lutheran faculty in Sao Leopoldo, where feminist professor Wanda Deifelt is making a real difference, and at the Methodist seminary in Rio de Janeiro provided opportunities to meet even more wonderful women who hold a key to the future of theology. Of particular note is the Sofia Project at ISER, a research and action center in Rio, which includes a focus on Afro-Brazilian women doing theology out of their experiences.

Myriad impressions linger. Will Lula win the elections? Will the favelas, once wood, now brick, ever be replaced? How will my students, especially the lesbian women, find their way in patriarchal churches? How can we in the WA-

TER network contribute books and other materials, and how can we speed up our Portuguese lessons so as to learn from them? How are my housemates and their children? What are my male students saying now that they have had a taste of feminist work in religion? When can I go back?

On the same swing, I was able to see longtime **WATER** friends and colleagues in Buenos Aires, Argentina. La Urdimbre de Aquehua, a women's group with a focus on spirituality, sponsored a workshop on "Ecofeminist Theology and Spirituality." What a thrill to see women from different socio-economic classes discussing issues with one another in the style of a "discipleship of equals." Oh Buenos Aires, where dear friends, fine wine and a vibrant city beckon.

Con-spirando, a women's group focused on ecofeminism and spirituality in Santiago, Chile, was equally welcoming. An evening discussion with forty people on "Tears in Our Eyes: Feminist Ethics" proved that a conversational mode invites broad participation. That group publishes a journal by the same name (write **WATER** for subscription information) and is eager to deepen its exchange with North American and other Latin American women through joint summer programs currently in the dream stage.

Women continue to cross worlds, and **WATER** women with them. I returned from this venture more persuaded than ever of the organic, feminist approach we are evolving with one another. It is not a big bucks, glitzy, "parachute in" model, but one which involves long-term commitment, a lot of follow-up and connecting people with one another. It includes hospitality and language study, and an honest effort to be with one another on one another's terms. If this trip is any indication, it works wonders: I can now read and understand lots of Portuguese. Speaking is for next time.

## Internal Report

by Hetty Irmer

In the seven weeks that I was an intern at the **WATER** office, I was able to laugh, talk, work and play with women from across the country and around the world. These are women with stories to tell and visions to share, and **WATER** is the place where they come to do just that.

Sharing my summer experience with Visiting Scholars Coralie Ling and Anne Hall from Australia and Visiting Associate Anna Mae Mayer from Dartmouth, NH, added an extra dimension of fun and friendship. What a wonderful surprise it was when other remarkable women visited the **WATER** office for a day or so! I especially remember a conversation in the **WATER**

kitchen with Patricia Horsley from Australia and later with Cathy von Hefty from Argentina. I also had the opportunity to interview Janet Kalven and Coralie Ling regarding the Re-Imagining Conference for my senior thesis research.

Among the assignments I enjoyed most were working on the draft of a fundraising letter, as well as taking part in planning a women-church liturgy, then sharing the beauty of the liturgy with other women, including my mother!

I, too, have stories to tell, and I have found **WATER** to be a place of nurture and acceptance of my stories, where I can draw strength from this community of feminist, spiritual women.

Adams, Susan. TOWARDS A RESHAPED CHURCH: A FEMINIST LOOK AT THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH. Auckland, NZ: The Auckland Anglican Women's Resource Centre, P.O. Box 9573 (97 pages, NP).

A very helpful look at how things might be by a priest who knows the dangers and possibilities of everything she considers. Good for U.S. readers to learn about the very progressive work being done in New Zealand.

Cabezon, Jose Ignacio. BUDDHISM, SEXUALITY AND GENDER. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992 (241 pages, \$16.95).

A good introduction to gender studies in Buddhism, including topics related to homosexuality and transgendered issues.

Daniels, Cynthia R. AT WOMEN'S EXPENSE: STATE POWER AND THE POLITICS OF FETAL RIGHTS. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993 (183 pages, \$19.95).

As fetal research develops, women's rights run the risk of shrinking unless they are safeguarded carefully. A sobering scene.

Funk, Rus Ervin. STOPPING RAPE: A CHALLENGE FOR MEN. Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers (178 pages, \$12.95).

The next step after this "it's about time" book is for someone to write a version for young boys so that men can move from excuses to responsibility.

Gnanadason, Aruna. NO LONGER A SECRET: THE CHURCH AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN. Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 1993 (79 pages, \$9.95).

Violence against women is a common international problem which Aruna puts directly in front of the churches so that no one can say they did not know and all who read this can move toward action. A very helpful, constructive treatment of a devastating problem.

Gross, Rita M. BUDDHISM AFTER PATRIARCHY: A FEMINIST HISTORY, ANALYSIS, AND RECONSTRUCTION OF BUDDHISM. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1993 (365 pages, \$14.95).

The definitive treatment of feminism and Buddhism, well written, inviting, incisive and very satisfying from an analytic perspective. Kudos!

Henry, Kathleen M. THE BOOK OF OURS: LITURGIES FOR FEMINIST PEOPLE. Jamaica Plain, MA: Alabaster Jar Liturgical Arts (14 Rockwood St. 02130), 1993 (140 pages, \$17.95 includes postage and handling).

The "hours" will never be the same, and one can expect them to regain popularity with this creative approach.

## Resources

Herzog, Kristin. FINDING THEIR VOICE: PERUVIAN WOMEN'S TESTIMONIES OF WAR. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International (254 pages, \$18).

The author provides a framework for women to speak for themselves, and in so doing models how women from so-called First World countries can be helpful without "matronizing."

Jewell, Terri. THE BLACK WOMAN'S GUMBO YA-YA: QUOTATIONS BY BLACK WOMEN. Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1993 (210 pages, \$10.95).

Wisdom comes from many sources, and this book is like page after page of blessings, warnings and good news.

Jones, Ann. NEXT TIME, SHE'LL BE DEAD: BATTERING AND HOW TO STOP IT. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994 (272 pages, \$22).

An accessible treatment of a devastating problem, this volume includes constructive, sensitive choices for eradicating brutality.

Katz, Judith. RUNNING FIERCELY TOWARD A HIGH THIN SOUND. Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books, 1992 (186 pages, \$9.95).

A compelling read about how one person in a family deals with being decidedly different, with much to teach beyond the particulars of her experience.

Kramarae, Cheris and Dale Spender, editors. THE KNOWLEDGE EXPLOSION: GENERATIONS OF FEMINIST SCHOLARSHIP. New York: Teachers College Press, 1992 (533 pages, \$26.95).

Get this for your reference shelf, and read it like a novel. This collection is a valuable historical overview of the development of women's studies in a range of fields.

Long, Grace D. Cumming. PASSION AND REASON: WOMEN VIEWS OF CHRISTIAN LIFE. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993 (176 pages, \$14.99).

A refreshing new entre into the complexities of ethics using the arts, especially healing, as a resource.

Maguire, Daniel C. THE MORAL CODE OF JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY: RECLAIMING THE REVOLUTION. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993 (286 pages, \$14).

Dan Maguire has written a brilliant analysis that shows how useful religions can be despite their current performances. Full of wit and wisdom, this is an accessible, serious work that comes highly recommended for feminists.

Milhaven, John Giles. HADEWIJCH AND HER SISTERS: OTHER WAYS OF LOVING AND KNOWING. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993 (171 pages, \$12.95).

Giles Milhaven uses 13th and 20th century women writers to elucidate his own insightful ideas on love. Embodied knowing is highlighted in an erudite and inviting volume.

Northrup, Lesley A., editor. WOMEN AND RELIGIOUS RITUAL. Washington, DC: The Pastoral Press, 1993 (205 pages, \$13.95).

Rituals are where the rubber meets the road in religion. This collection helps to move the question, including work by Carole Rayburn, Diann Neu and Amityan Elayne Hyman.

Ricciuti, Gail Anderson and Rosemary Catalana Mitchell, editors. BIRTHINGS AND BLESSINGS II: MORE LIBERATING WORSHIP SERVICES FOR THE INCLUSIVE CHURCH. New York: Crossroad, 1993 (190 pages, \$13.95).

If mainline Christian churches have any hope of being communities of meaningful worship in the 21st century it is because of materials like these. A good investment in their futures for congregations.

Seanzoni, Letha Dawson and Virginia Ramey Mollenkott. IS THE HOMOSEXUAL MY NEIGHBOR? A POSITIVE CHRISTIAN RESPONSE, revised and updated. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994 (208 pages, \$11).

This classic only gets better. The authors add an autobiographical piece which tells "the whole story," as well as new data in science and scripture to bolster their original case. Well worth buying the new version (this from a reviewer who rarely does).

Tamez, Elsa. THE AMNESTY OF GRACE: JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH FROM A LATIN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE, translated by Sharon H. Ringe. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993 (208 pages, \$14.95).

A creative treatment of a troublesome doctrine which will help to reconfigure its content for the next century.



# Summer Action in House

Washington, DC has a reputation for being hot and humid in the summer. Silver Spring, which is contiguous to Washington (look out the WATER office and down the block, and there's DC), used to be the summer get-away for Washingtonians plagued by the heat. Apparently it still is because the air conditioned WATER office was in full flight as the Irish say.

Intern Hetty Irmer, Visiting Scholars Coralie Ling and Anne Hall and Visiting Associate Anna Mae Mayer formed the core group. Mary Dorr and Kelly Cregan were regular volunteers. In-house weekly seminars were popular on women-church, the Re-imagining Conference and boundary issues. There always seemed to be tea.

Judy Ress, a Maryknoll volunteer from Conspirando in Santiago, Chile began and ended her U.S. visit at WATER, with discussion on how Latin and North American women can share feminist theological resources toward credentials and empowerment.

A Saturday seminar with Mary Hunt on "Not for Lesbians Only: Contributions of Lesbians to Feminist Theology" provided food for thought.

Questions focused on how lesbian issues are interwoven into a feminist approach rather than isolated on their own in the field. Deep gratitude was expressed for the work of lesbian women, some still unacknowledged for fear of reprisals even against their memories.

Janet Kalven sparked a breakfast gathering with her tales of life in the Grail movement. She inspired WATER people with her octogenarian energy and enthusiasm for feminist work rooted in a spiritual tradition. Grail members Anne Hope of South Africa and Sally Timmel of the U.S. added their insights. WATER is indebted to the Grail and women's groups like it for models of how to do the simple solidarity building so necessary for collective survival.

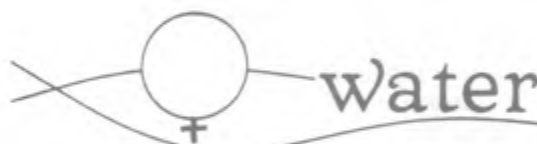
Mary Daly's *Outercourse* was the focus of a lively night in the office. Voyagers who had been at Mary's November 1993 reading co-sponsored by WATER, and women who had never heard of Mary Daly, gathered to discuss the "spiral galaxies." Mary Hunt offered a sail through Mary Daly's work, accenting the insights with the humor which characterizes the

genius of Mary Daly. It was a night to remember, culminating with a collective reading of "The Great Summation." If only Mary Daly had been there, but the group concluded that she was.

Feminist liturgies gathered a community of women during the heat. In "Summer Solstice: A Fulfillment of Wishes," women lit red candles to renew the sun's energy while it was at its turning point, invoked the Goddess of Fire in her many forms and faces, meditated on the rainbow of colors reflected in the flames, made wishes as they floated red flowers in water, and leaped over the fire for protection and courage.

Women's power was evident in a liturgy "Power Moves Through Women." After exorcising abusive power, women listened to readings on feminist power and reflected on the source of power and how women use it to produce change. A Litany of Power, a Blessing of Women's Power, and Passing the Power closed the circle.

So much for the lazy, hazy days of summer. August is always our time of rest. No wonder.



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