



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

## Editorial

Paradigms shift slowly, quietly. Then things happen and suddenly people notice as the world makes sense in new categories. Such is the case with "Discipleship of Equals," that visionary phrase with concrete implications coined by Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza and used recently as the theme of the Women's Ordination Conference 20th Anniversary Gathering.

WATER congratulates WOC and applauds its wisdom in moving toward new models rather than insisting on "sub-ordination" in a kyriarchal church. Discipleship of Equals has implications well beyond Catholic circles.

The papal bull "clarifying" that the teaching on ordination is infallible proved just how threatening new models are to old. We picture new roles and responsibilities for women as horses frolicking in the paddock under bright sunlight while the Pope is busily nailing the barn door shut. Such is the practical import of this "infallible" statement.

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious, on hearing the Vatican pronouncement, declared a day of reflection and fasting. We respectfully suggested that people break the fast with feminist eucharists to emphasize just how thankful we are for the deepening of feminist consciousness such nonsense brings about. Sophia has her ways.

Without buying into infallibility, we decry the squandering of moral authority on something so patently untrue. We need strong moral voices, indeed feminist religious voices of all faiths, to protest the cuts in welfare which strike vulnerable women and children, to persuade the warring factions in Bosnia to seek peace, to put into the garbage can of history the Contract with America, to tell the so-called Religious Right to take a hike.

A new paradigm is upon us and we it. Let us herald it with timbrels and dancing.



## All Our Children

by Mary E. Hunt

When people ask how many children I have, I am tempted to answer "eight." The fact is that I do not have children of my own, but volunteer weekly at a home for so-called "boarder babies." These are children who are literally left at birth to board at hospitals because their parents, essentially their mothers and extended families, cannot care for them due to illness, poverty or death. Many of the babies are crack-exposed in utero with consequent problems of health and development. All of them are dear.

Happily, an African American nurses' sorority, Chi Eta Phi, saw the need and started the Chi Child Care Center in Washington, DC, where eight cribs are kept filled all year round. Cuddling and playing with these babies as what theorist Patricia Hill Collins calls an "othermother," prompts me to reflect on all of our children, a long-ignored theme in feminist

answers. But one thing is sure, namely, that children belong to all of us. This insight, better, this commitment, is conspicuously absent in current debates on welfare reform in which children are so privatized as to be the individual property of, read: responsibility of, their usually single mothers.

This notion of children as private property is widespread. Ask any divorced parents what stymied their settlement most. Or, ask parents who face college tuition bills larger than their combined incomes can afford. They will be quick to say how precious their children are, and how expensive. Few would trade their children, but equally few think imaginatively and creatively about how we can and must share them in order best to provide for them.

Parents worry, rightly, over the threat of kidnapping, the nightmare of their child being ab-

*But one thing is sure, namely,  
that children belong to all of us.*

theology, but one which strikes at the very heart of the family values debate.

The issue is simple but challenging: as the shape of families and communities shifts, what happens to the children? Put another way, how can we be sure that we are providing adequately for our children as our relational constellations change? Of course many children fell through the cracks in more stable times, but as we encourage new forms of family and as the realities of a 50% divorce rate sink in, children loom as our most valuable and vulnerable natural resource. How we care for them, just as how we care for earth, is a key measure of our civilization. It is an urgent ethical priority since for many of them their survival hangs in the balance as government programs are cut and their mothers' marital status is viewed as more important than a baby's hunger. We live in vicious times.

The misnamed religious right makes a virtue of certainty at a time when there are no easy

ducted in a shopping mall as they fumble for change at the cash register. Likewise, they worry about sexual abuse in day care centers or schools, about pedophilia and molestation. But mostly they worry about giving their children the opportunities and implements they need for a full life in a culture which confuses and commands all at once.

I contend that such responsibilities need to be shared because they are, after all, **all** our children. Privatizing children, just like privatizing everything else, only serves to privilege some and disenfranchise most. We can and must do better.

Children understood as private property is a function of the nuclear family. As such, it is a relatively new phenomenon, a post-industrial revolution invention which stands in sharp contrast to earlier models of extended family. Then, the tribe was made up of three or four generations (granted, most people lived shorter lives) (continued on page 2)



ISSN 0898-6606

Vol. 8, No. 4, Winter 1995-6

Editors: Mary E. Hunt and Diann L. Neu

Designer: Diann L. Neu

Editorial Assistant: Carol Murdock Scinto

Layout Assistant: Margaret M. Sequeira

Computer Consultant: Jessica Weissman

Graphic Artists: Acknowledged when known,  
and always appreciated.

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:

Editors

**WATERwheel**

8035 13th Street

Silver Spring, MD 20910-4803 USA

Phone (301) 589-2509; FAX (301) 589-3150

Internet E-mail: mary.hunt@his.com

No need to give **WATERwheel** away, cut it up, copy it or forego sharing. If you know someone with whom you'd particularly like to share this issue, just send us her or his name and address and we'll mail a complimentary copy direct. Better yet, send us a list of friends and relatives you'd like to acquaint with WATER, and we'll introduce ourselves.

If you or someone you know would like to receive **WATERwheel** on tape, we will be happy to arrange for audio transcription of the issue(s) you desire. Contact WATER, 301-589-2509. Cassettes will be made by Volunteers for the Visually Handicapped at a cost of \$10 per tape.

## ..Children *(continued from page 1)*

who lived in reasonable proximity so as to form meaningful bonds. Our situation is simply very different, with most Americans living some distance from the majority of their blood relatives. Our pilgrimages at Thanksgiving time and our high phone bills are the best evidence that we want to honor blood ties. But more is at stake than blood when friends, community and colleagues rival, and often now replace, family members as significant others. Still, what about the children?

Some feminist theologians have begun to explore issues of motherhood and family with attention to how women continue to carry the bulk of the responsibility, encouraging fathers to join in their care. But I propose extending the web of concern more widely, beginning to acknowledge that all of us, whether we choose to be parents or not, have a stake in and therefore a responsibility for children. This is an easy thing to say, a difficult thing to do. Ironically, it may turn out to be easier for those of us labeled "childless" to take on children than it will be for those with children to share them, but it is a two-way street that the children need us to make safe.

Population concerns counsel smaller sized families. But even one child is a lot if there is only one caretaker, one bill payer, one authority, one protector. Two parents can split the job, but even they are inadequate to the myriad needs of another child, much less several children. Children need lots of caretakers, the aunts and tias, the friends of the family and other euphemisms we construct to encourage relationships. But I am suggesting something more now, a kind of

ents, foster and adoptive parents demonstrate. It is time to get more people involved, to even out the burden a bit so that parents will not be driven to maim and murder children when the demands exceed their supply of patience and resources.

There is the self-interested side of caring for children, the idea of having them so that they will take care of us in our later years, or so that there will be more hands to work and enhance the family's well being. But all of this is decidedly secondary to the critical issue of our self-understanding as post-modern people at the century change scratching our heads about what it means to be human.

I submit that what it means from a feminist perspective is to be conscious of and concerned with all of creation in its radical unity and equality. In such a view, children belong to the many, not to the few. They are the future of all of us, not just some parents' ticket to success or bankruptcy. They are an excuse to lavish love, an affirmation that we are part of history's endless parade of people who are not, for a reason, all born at the same time. That reason is so that we may accompany each other through life in all stages, seeing in one another what has been and what will be all at once. To privatize such experiences is to abort variety, to truncate history.

This perspective on children invites serious social changes starting with a welfare system based on human need, not on marital status. But before that will happen it demands a change of consciousness, yes, heart too, about the relationship of children to adults. Until and unless we socialize them, that is, share them as a society, we will reinforce the problems.

My babies, better, our babies, have a rocky

## *This perspective on children invites serious social changes starting with a welfare system based on human need, not on marital status.*

human ecology to go along with the earthly one.

We have come a long way in our consciousness about earth—how we must care and reverence it, reuse, recycle and reduce so as to maximize its resources. But we have paid almost no attention to *how*, with the same concern, we interact with children. As increasing numbers of us choose no or few biological offspring, we are creating a have's and have not's of a new sort. It is hard to imagine how we can share children when some people are up for the 3 a.m. feedings, or the midnight phone calls from the police about adolescents' escapades. But with some of our children dying in gang violence and drive-by shootings, some committing suicide or otherwise expressing their despair, we cannot offer too much or too varied adult attention.

We are capable of it, as so many grandpar-

start in life. For example, one was born a twin in a laundromat, dropped on her head and bereft of her sibling who died at birth. I can't help but contrast her with the new baby who arrived at WATER this year to more love already than that child may experience in a lifetime. It need not be that way. It will not be if we embrace them all as ours and begin to change our ways.

Imagine if all of us had concrete economic and social responsibility for children at all stages of life. Imagine if "adult only" communities were as frowned upon as "adult only" bookstores. Imagine if "All My Children" became "All Our Children." Feminist theological work is imaginative activity.

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

# In The Beginning...



## A New Mother's View

by Cynthia A. Lapp

It is safe to say that Cecilia was the youngest "woman" at the WOC Gathering. Her first 32 days were typical of what most white, middle class, North American babies experience. But days 33 to 35 were unique. Blessed by women passersby, cuddled by young feminists, "seated" for dinner with Mary Hunt, Diann Neu and Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, Cecilia got to experience the power of women in a way most of us rarely if ever do in our lifetimes. I hope this becomes the rule rather than the exception for her and her generation.

Now Cecilia has been with us several months, and though the time passes quickly, the issues her presence raises remain. When Eric, my husband, dresses her in the pink dress, why do I flinch? (Is it really because it is too cold for short dresses?) Why does she seem asexual and agender to me? How does one define gender apart from sexuality? How can I teach Cecilia what it means to be a woman when the societal definition is constantly changing and not always in ways with which I agree? How do I communicate that she can be whatever she wants to be when the roles her parents play at home are so traditional?

I am still too deep in diapers and detergent to have any answers to these and many other questions. My hope is that Cecilia will learn what I learned so poignantly at the WOC Gathering. As we sang together, "You are fashioned in my image" (Colleen Fulmer, *Wings Unfurled*), I looked at Cecilia nestled in my arms and experienced anew that child and mother, girl and woman, are both made in the image of God.

---

Cynthia A. Lapp is office administrator at WATER besides being an increasingly accomplished Mom.

## A Scandinavian Feminist's Thoughts

by Solveig Boasdottir

I am a woman of little Faith in the traditional meaning. But as a moral person my faith concerns what I believe is right or wrong in this world.

At the WOC gathering I experienced an incredibly strong feeling of solidarity with the women there. Coming from an environment where all problems are "being solved," where women have been ordained for more than thirty years (Sweden), I recognized that even so we still have the same kyriarchal/patriarchal structures in church, society and within families. In the WOC Gathering's "Laying on of hands for the commissioning for feminist ministry" I felt empowered in the ongoing process of resisting structural evil, for the ongoing journey to justice and "a discipleship of equals."

Being mother of two wonderful children and trying to raise them well, I have a vision, a belief in justice and the future. My mother/feminist ministry could be described as trying to create a discipleship of equals within my family, a just relationship between me and my children. It is a ministry of giving my children much love and respect. It is a ministry of education, politics, peace, healing, faith-sharing and much more.

This ministry cannot be preached "from on high" but has to be lived, felt and experienced by children in daily life. If children do not experience respect, love and justice in their daily reality at home (and elsewhere), how can they ever come to grips with what it looks like and whether it is worth struggling for?

To experience justice and harmony in life as an ongoing context is my vision—not just for my own biological children, but for all children. They are the future, everyone says, but we are responsible for that future. Pour out your Spirit, Sophia-Wisdom, and bless us in our ongoing struggle for a discipleship of equals.

---

Solveig Boasdottir is a Visiting Scholar from Uppsala here in the WATER office working on her doctoral dissertation.

## A Grandmother's Perspective

by Carol Murdock Scinto

Forty years ago I knew all there was to know about raising children. Then I had some of my own.

Looking back, I marvel at my temerity. As a non-Catholic marrying a Catholic in pre-Vatican II days, I signed papers promising to bring up our prospective offspring "in the faith." In due course we had four daughters (within five years, according to accepted doctrine), and I kept my bargain: car-pooling weekly to CCD; serving fish on Fridays; accompanying our brood, all hatted and gloved, to Mass on Sundays; kneeling on cue. I also spoke my own truth, which didn't exactly coincide with the **Baltimore Catechism**. My dear Catholic spouse insisted, "Your conscience supersedes the Pope."

Looking now at my daughters, I marvel at their diversity, complexity, integrity, spirit. What did I impart to them that begins to compare with what they've taught me? I've learned more questions than answers these past 36 years, entertained more doubts than certainties. I've examined absolutes that proved as insubstantial as smoke, challenged concepts in my own head that collapsed to dust under scrutiny. God no longer wears a long white beard, Eve is a Wise Old Woman (like me), and a "discipleship of equals" articulates a way of living that fits my soul.

And what of my grandchildren? Today, our eldest worries over how to raise her son and daughter to be faith-filled, purposeful, confident and loving children in a rural community where neighbors dispense prayer cards depicting the "Rapturing," and the local priest is suspiciously solicitous of little boys. She asks my advice. What can I say? Be honest. Be open, and uncertain. Be ready for a whole new dimension of religious experience. As for the priest—keep a safe distance.

---

Carol Murdock Scinto, a long-time volunteer at WATER, was officially crowned recently on her 70th birthday.

# A Welcoming and Naming

by Diann L. Neu

Welcoming a newborn into the community is an age-old custom. This ceremony is designed for a home celebration. It is easily adapted to a church or other special place. Center a table in a circle of chairs. Gather symbolic gifts for the child, such as those listed in this ritual. If you wish, invite family or friends to be godparents.

This is written for a girl child whose parents are both present for the naming. If the child is a boy, and/or one parent only is present, adapt accordingly.

**Gathering Music:** (Lullabies play as people arrive.)

## Welcome and Introductions

(The parents welcome the guests.)

Welcome to this Naming Ceremony for N. We are so glad that you are here. You have supported us from conception through pregnancy to birth and now presentation of our child to this community.

Some of you know each other; some are just meeting. You are an important community for us and N., so we want you to meet each other. Speak your name and say, briefly, how you are connected to our family. (Sharing)

## Call to Celebrate

(A representative of the community speaks.)

Today we welcome this new child into our circle of family and friends. Most cultures and traditions welcome and name a new person with a ceremony.

We gather to promise our support and friendship to (name the child and the parents.) We gather to participate in the universal impulse to celebrate a new life.

This is the day the Holy One,  
the Creator of All Life, has made for us.  
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.  
Let there be feasting and laughter.

For unto us a child is born.  
Unto us an heir is given.  
May this child be wonderful and wise,  
a maker of peace.  
Blessed is she who comes  
in the name of the Beloved.

**Song with Procession:** "Welcome to the World My Child" by Robbie Gass

During the song the parents will present N. to each of us. Gently touch, greet and bless this precious child. (Parents walk around the circle and pause in front of each person. When the

presentation is completed, the child is put in a place of honor.)

## Testifying to the Birth and Naming

(The parents describe N.'s birth and state what and why they named the child.)

## Bless the Parents

(A representative of the community blesses.)

N. and N., we thank you for making the choice to bring new life into your family, our community and the world. Receive now a blessing in thanksgiving for you and your life.

Be praised, Creator of All Life,  
for (mother's name)  
who gave birth to a daughter.  
Surround her with love,  
energy and healing powers.  
Be praised, Creator of All Life,  
for (father's name)  
who helped to birth a daughter.  
Surround him with love,  
encouragement and tenderness.  
May you both take care of  
(baby's name)  
and model for her  
deep respect for all creation.

## Affirm the Godparents

(If this is part of your tradition, the mother asks:)

(Name of godparents), as representatives of our families and our community, will you support (baby's name) and call her to be most fully herself?

(Godparents respond:) We will.

## Readings

(Family and friends share poems, scripture passages, and writings that are favorites. We have used:)

"Little Girl Child" by Gwen Benjamin, written August 1992 for the birth of her granddaughter, Millicent, and sent to WATER on the birth of Cecilia Ann Lapp Stoltzfus.

Little girl child Newborn,  
God's image Reborn,  
Enfolded in your mother's gentle arms,  
Nestling.  
For you, her body was broken,  
Her blood was shed,  
God's grace.  
You feel her heart beat close to yours,  
God's pulse.  
Little girl child I greet you.



Soft whisper of Divine Sophia  
You were there from the beginning of time.  
I have known you forever.  
Gentle, people-loving spirit  
Seeking others on the road,  
Inviting them to dinner.  
Image of God's goodness.

Brave defiant Lilith,  
Taking tea with God,  
Dancing and celebrating with God.  
Nascent Earth Mother,  
The seeds of life already within you,  
Co-creator with God,  
Your blood to shed - not to maim in war,  
But to cleanse, purify, create.  
Little girl child I celebrate you.

Will you know violence in this man's world?  
Will your gentle sexuality be allowed to blossom?  
Will you know the joy of mutuality?  
Little girl child I fear for you.

O God who brought us to birth,  
Who loves and nurtures us as a mother,  
Enfold this little one in your strong gentle arms.  
She is your daughter, your sister, your lover.  
Weave her life with strong fine thread.

Little daughter, granddaughter, sister, friend,  
I love you.

**Song:** "Womanchild" by Carole Etzler, from *Womanriver Flowing On*, c 1977.

Can you hear the wind singing,  
Womanchild, Womanchild.



# Ceremony for a Child

As to life you come springing, Womanchild (2x)  
With the strength of an eagle  
May you soar to the sun.  
With the grace of the willow  
May you dance, may you run.  
May the earth find you growing, Womanchild  
And may love guard your going, Womanchild.

And the world you inherit, Womanchild (2x)  
May you joyfully share it, Womanchild (2x)  
For you are the sister of each one living there  
Of the beasts in the forests,  
Of the birds in the air.  
May you love and defend them, Womanchild (2x)  
May you always befriend them, Womanchild.

May you live ever after, Womanchild (2x)  
A life filled with laughter, Womanchild (2x)  
May you climb to the mountains,  
May you sail o'r the sea,  
May you run through the meadow,  
May you always be free.  
May the warm wind caress you, Womanchild  
May God smile, may she bless you, Womanchild.

## Reflection

This is a time for sharing wishes, hopes and dreams for N. What do we wish for N.? Children, if you would like to draw pictures for N., materials are on the kitchen table. These cards are for the rest of us to write a message for N. When she is older she can read them herself to remember this special day in her life. What do we wish for N.? (*Writing and drawing of wishes*)

**Song:** "In Your Presence" by Colleen Fulmer from **Dancing Sophia's Circle**, c. 1994.

We are bathed in radiance, clothed in Glory,  
Crowned in splendor, embraced in joy.  
O Wisdom Sophia (2x)  
The power and presence of God.

## Bless the Child with Water

(*A representative blesses with water.*)

As the water breaks in the mother's womb, as the water broke in your mother's womb to welcome you into the world, so we use water today to welcome you, N., into this community of family and friends. Water connects you with your ancestors and all of humanity.

(*The blessing takes the bowl of water, breathes on it, and says:*)

In the beginning,  
The Spirit brooded over the waters.  
Before there were rivers, seas and springs,  
Sophia-Wisdom was present.

In the watered garden, Eve knew bliss.  
Through the waters of the flood,  
Women kept faith.  
By the waters of the sea, Miriam danced  
Her People to a promised land.  
In the water of the womb, all life finds its course.  
In the waters of the wells, women find hope  
And carry it to whole towns.  
In Galilee, in Canaan, in Babylon, in Africa and Asia and Latin America,  
In every part of the World,  
Women carry water.

(*The blessing touches the water and says:*)  
Pour now your Spirit upon this water.

(*The parents and godparents dip their hands in the water, touch the child and say:*)  
Pour out your Spirit upon N:  
The spirit of love and joy,  
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
The spirit of right judgement and courage,  
The spirit of knowledge and reverence.

## Honor the Child with Gifts

(*Several people offer gifts.*)

We bless you, N., this day with gifts that remind us of you. (*She is blessed with gifts that are appropriate for her and her family. The following, individually or in combination, have been given to other children.*)

(*N. is anointed with oil.*)  
\_\_\_\_, we anoint you with the oil of salvation.  
As Christ was anointed Priest and Prophet, may you minister as Sophia-Spirit calls you.

(*N. is given a garment.*)  
\_\_\_\_, receive this garment as an outward sign of your dignity. May you and others respect your body always.

(*N. is given a lighted candle.*)  
\_\_\_\_, receive this candle as a symbol of warmth, creativity and life. May your life spark peace and justice for all.

(*N. is given a seedling tree.*)  
\_\_\_\_, receive this tree as a symbol of the ways you will grow and change.

(*N. is given pictures the children have drawn. Invite the children to present them.*)

\_\_\_\_, receive these pictures of our wishes for you on this day.

(*N. is given the cards participants have written. Invite them to speak aloud their wishes.*)

\_\_\_\_, receive our dreams and hopes for you this day.

## Remember the Ancestors

(*A family member prays:*)

Let us pray, remembering our ancestors, in a

litany of presence. Our response is "Be with us today and always."

All you who have cared for children: loved them, cuddled them, fed them, changed their diapers, raised them to be just and compassionate,  
Be with us today and always.

Ancestors of N.'s blood line (*name specific ones.*)  
Be with us today and always.

Creators of the home of N. (*name the immediate household: birth-givers, caretakers, siblings...*),  
Be with us today and always.

All who have cared for Planet Earth to make it safe and healthy for the next generations,  
Be with us today and always.

In the company of the Beloved Creator who makes us in Her Divine Image, we promise to care for children from generation to generation. Amen. Blessed be. Let us make it so.

## Final Blessing

Filled with awe and wonder at the delicacy of new life, let us bless one another.

May we bring joy to those who love us, as we grow to love in return.

May our spirits enlarge in a life of goodness and joy.

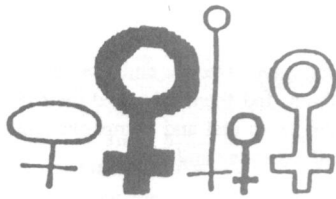
May we model for the next generations deep respect for all humanity.

## Eating Together

Let our party continue with food and feasting. (*All share a dinner, dessert or symbolic food together.*)

Diann L. Neu, M.Div., MSW, is co-director of WATER.





## In Memory of Her

*From Virginia Gilligan, Camden, NJ:*

In honor of the recent celebration by two friends, **Gerrie Muller, SSJ**, and **Carol Zinn, SSJ**, of their Silver Jubilee as Sisters of St. Joseph.

*From Jessica Weissman, Washington, DC:*

In memory of **Sue Oswald**, well loved teacher and friend whose great heart gave out long before it should have. Whole hosts of your able-bodied friends learned laughter, strength and commitment from you.

*From Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, Cambridge, MA:*

In honor of the tireless work of Ruth McDonough Fitzpatrick at the Women's Ordination Conference for a Discipleship of Equals.

*From Jane Redmont, Berkeley, CA:*

In memory of my friend, The Rev. Canon M. Jeanne Sproat, wise woman, Episcopal priest, and steadfast friend to me and to countless women.

*From WATER:*

In gratitude for the pioneering ecumenical work of Dame Nita Barrow, among the first Co-Presidents of the World Council of Churches, and Madeleine Barot, early advocate for women at the World Council of Churches and one of two women observers at the Second Vatican Council.



## Mother's Fund Update

The Mothers' Fund continues to grow. The latest donation from Joe and Carol Scinto honors Joe's aunt, **Maria Carmela Gentilesca**, a strong woman now in her 90's, whose life reminds the Scintos that motherhood does not derive from biology but from loving care of children no matter who bore them. Aunt Carmela defines the fund, proving that it is not for mothers only, but for all those who nurture, care for and challenge us. Consider giving in honor of your many "mothers," even if some of them are male!

Gifts made possible by the fund this year include books galore to women's groups around the world. Women in Chile, South Africa, Brazil and the Philippines have received packages of feminist/womanist/mujerista books from WATER to add to their libraries in memory of the mothers of us all. Enthusiastic thank you's confirm our sense that sharing in this way builds a global network of women in religion.

A small grant to encourage a Chilean Protestant woman studying theology in Brazil was a Mothers' Fund first this year. As the Fund grows, so too does our ability to share with women as they gain the skills and degrees necessary to change the world. May our mothers' spirits continue to soar.

## Generous Donors

Every donation to WATER is deeply appreciated, acknowledged, and used several times over as we make a lot of change on modest amounts of money.

Special thanks to Dignity/San Francisco members, who contributed 10% of their Sunday offering to WATER as an organization which supports lesbian/gay/bisexual and transgendered people.

A unique and creative donation this year came from our good friends at Passport Executive Travel (for travel needs call 800 344-7794 and ask for Jay; tell her WATER sent you!) in the form of two airlines tickets.

Note our new office furniture from Coram Healthcare as we spruce up things for the new year. Thanks, Debbie LaFontaine!

Your donation is equally necessary and equally appreciated. We count on you to respond to our year-end donation letter to keep our "Cup of Blessing" brimming. Thank you.

## Ubiquitous Co-directors

WATER co-directors felt ubiquitous this fall: **Mary E. Hunt** compared Women Church-Convergence and Catholic Organizations for Renewal (COR) in workshops at the Call to Action gathering in Chicago. She spoke on "Safe Sex, Safe Spirit" for United Methodists in Wisconsin, and preached on the topic of diversity at the United Church of Christ in New London, WI. She joined the Blauvelt Dominican Sisters and their friends for a day-long discussion in New York on "Living in Right Relationships."

Mary was invited to give the Convocation address at St. Stephen's College, Edmonton, Alberta on theological education as a necessary luxury. Former WATER intern Kitty Stafford is in the D.Min. program there and runs a wonderful house for women leaving prostitution. Mary also preached on "Everlasting Joy" at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC (yes, from that high pulpit) in its Advent guest preacher series.

She chaired a panel on backlash at the American Academy of Religion meeting in Philadelphia and later joined Theresa Kane and Mari Castellanos at the Women's Ordination Conference Gathering to deepen insights on the same theme with attention to ecclesial examples.

Mary is an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Women's Studies Program at Georgetown University where this fall she taught feminist ethics. She rounded out the year with board meetings—the Religious Consultation on Population, Reproductive Health and Ethics which met in Chicago, and Catholics for a Free Choice which met in Chiapas, Mexico. Through these activities, WATER is represented around the world.

**Diann L. Neu** coordinated the Program, Liturgy and Environment Committees plus chaired the Liturgy Committee for the historic 20th Anniversary Gathering of the Women's Ordination Conference. She also gave a day-long seminar on "Creating Feminist Liturgies" for the Benedictine Priory and their friends in Lacey, WA, participated as coordinator at the Women-Church Convergence bi-annual meeting in San Antonio, TX, provided grief counseling for the staff of People for the American Way on the untimely death of its director.

Diann planned four liturgies for WATER's monthly liturgy group: Awaiting the Birth for Cindy Lap; A Harvest Celebration; Thanksgiving; and Winter Solstice. She facilitated two groups through WATER: a ten-week lesbian couples group and an eight-week feminist spirituality group which then continued meeting monthly. She meets regularly with clients for psychotherapy and spiritual direction.

# Resources

Center for Women's Global Leadership. **GENDER VIOLENCE AND WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS IN AFRICA**. New Brunswick, NJ: CWGL, Douglass College, 1994 (42 pages, \$7).

This jewel of a booklet puts African women's issues in an African women's perspective. A useful antidote to even the most well intentioned efforts to dictate African women's future. A must for international feminist work.

Aldredge-Clanton, Jann. **IN SEARCH OF THE CHRIST-SOPHIA: AN INCLUSIVE CHRISTOLOGY FOR LIBERATING CHRISTIANS**. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1995 (189 pages, \$14.95).

New scholarship is made accessible to a broad audience, with liturgies and suggestions for actually living it out.

Christ, Carol P. **ODYSSEY WITH THE GODDESS: A SPIRITUAL QUEST IN CRETE**. New York: Continuum, 1995 (173 pages, \$18.95).

A memoir written with real skill about the theological aspects of one woman's journey. Intriguing.

Elkins, Heather Murray. **WORSHIPPING WOMEN: RE-FORMING GOD'S PEOPLE FOR PRAISE**. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994 (172 pages, \$14.95).

An unusual, sometimes insightful approach to worship which is sure to spark other creative ideas.

Hayes, Diana L. **HAGAR'S DAUGHTERS: WOMANIST WAYS OF BEING IN THE WORLD**. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1995 (67 pages, \$4.95).

This Madeleva Lecture is a womanist primer, a useful overview of the field and its implications for "healthy, healing and holy life." Read it and learn.

Hopkins, Julie M. **TOWARDS A FEMINIST CHRISTOLOGY: JESUS OF NAZARETH, EUROPEAN WOMEN AND THE CHRISTOLOGICAL CRISIS**. Kampen, The Netherlands, 1994 (134 pages, \$26).

A basic introduction to the theme geared especially to women ministers who struggle with the concrete problems of kyriarchal Christianity on the wane and their own vocational demands.

Kadel, Andrew. **MATROLOGY: A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WRITINGS BY CHRISTIAN WOMEN FROM THE FIRST TO THE FIFTEENTH CENTURIES**. New York: Continuum, 1995 (191 pages, \$29.50).

A handy reference for the more than 200

women whose work is usually buried under the debris of patriarchy.

Pratt, Minnie Bruce. **S/HE**. Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books, 1995 (189 pages, \$10.95).

Whew. Check your assumptions at the front cover. Provocative reflections guarantee that categories fall on every page.

Reid, Kathryn Goering. **PREVENTING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE. A CURRICULUM FOR CHILDREN AGES FIVE THROUGH EIGHT**. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1995 (136 pages, \$11.95).

It is never too early to start this training. A good resource for all our children.

Riggs, Marcia Y. **AWAKE, ARISE AND ACT: A WOMANIST CALL FOR BLACK LIBERATION**. New York: Pilgrim Press, 1995 (168 pages, \$12.95).

A good sociological start toward a womanist ethical program.

Soelle, Dorothee. **CREATIVE DISOBEDIENCE**. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1995 (96 pages, \$9.95).

A powerful new introduction brings this text up to the minute at a time when we all need encouragement to question everything.

Robins, Wendy S. **THROUGH THE EYES OF A WOMAN: BIBLICAL STUDIES ON THE EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN**. Revised edition. Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 1995 (165 pages, \$14.95).

A useful handbook of bible studies with updated emphasis on economic issues.

Tardiff, Mary, editor. **AT HOME IN THE WORLD: THE LETTERS OF THOMAS MERTON AND ROSEMARY RADFORD RUETHER**. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995 (\$12.95, 108 pages).

Treat yourself. Rosemary was born astute, as these letters make clear. Thomas Merton was the lucky recipient of her wisdom, and she the helpful theologian speaking plain English about insightful, well grounded spirituality.

Van Wijk-Bos, Johanna W.H. **RE-IMAGINING GOD: THE CASE FOR SCRIPTURAL DIVERSITY**. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995 (119 pages, \$12.99).

A very simple approach to a complex problem for those who say it is all too difficult to understand. Helpful for church groups beginning to address issues of language, imagery and content of the divine.

Ward, Hannah, Jennifer Wild, Janet Morely, editors. **CELEBRATING WOMEN**. London: SPCK, 1995 (166 pages, 9.99 Pounds).

A new edition of an oft used worship book including many new contributors. Prayers for a range of circumstances, including rituals by Diann L. Neu.

White, Evelyn C. **CHAIN CHAIN CHANGE: FOR BLACK WOMEN IN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS**. Seattle, WA: Seal Press, 1995 (new expanded edition) (120 pages, \$8.95).

Practical, insightful and by no means for African American women only.

Wilson, Melba. **CROSSING THE BOUNDARY: BLACK WOMEN SURVIVE INCEST**. Seattle, WA: Seal Press, 1994 (240 pages, \$12.95).

So much pain, so much insight, such strong writing, this book belongs in the hands of all who have survived incest and/or are working with those who are still suffering.

Winter, Miriam Therese, Adair Lummis and Allison Stokes. **DEFECTING IN PLACE: WOMEN CLAIMING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR OWN SPIRITUAL LIVES**. New York: Crossroad, 1994 (312 pages, \$22.95).

A broad picture of what WATER and other groups are and do, this welcome sociological volume invites theological next steps.

Zuckerman, Francine, editor. **HALF THE KINGDOM: SEVEN JEWISH FEMINISTS**. Montreal, Canada: Vehicule Press, 1992 (160 pages, \$13.95).

These interviews with principles (including Esther Broner and Naomi Goldenberg) from a film of the same name make powerful reading and good material for study groups.

## Especially for Children

Potaracke, Rochelle. **NANNY'S SPECIAL GIFT**. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1993 (32 pages, \$4.95).

Kids need to know about things that they can't yet spell, like Alzheimer's Disease, from which Patrick's grandmother suffers. This lovely story helps to explain it in terms and feelings children can understand. A real find for families affected by the problem, as this reviewer can attest.



# News and Notes

**Solveig Boasdotir**, an Icelandic theologian who is finishing her doctorate in Uppsala, Sweden, is at WATER as a Visiting Scholar for the winter. She is writing a dissertation on violence in marriage, with special attention to how intimate relations can be made safe.

**Andrea Eichmeier**, doctoral student in theology at Munich, spent several weeks at WATER this fall. She is also writing a dissertation on violence, so found our resource center very useful, not to mention the fount of good times and hospitality in WATER's inimitable style.

**Marga Buehrig**, feminist ecumenical pioneer and one of the first women co-presidents of the World Council of Churches, celebrated her 80th birthday in Zurich at a symposium honoring the

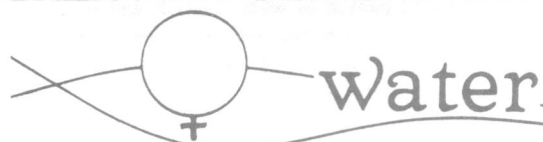


occasion. Diann Neu developed a liturgy bringing blessings from around the world. Mary Hunt joined Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, Herta Leistner, Aruna Gnanadason and Barbel Wartenberg Potter in the discussion of feminist justice themes. More than four hundred participants made for a festive celebration.

A new project for WATER began this fall with an organizational meeting of people working publicly and with enthusiasm in Feminist Liberation Theology in the current repressive cli-

mate. **Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza** and **Mary Hunt** convened the meeting of more than 100 people in conjunction with the WOC gathering. There is real enthusiasm about setting up a network for theo-political action, support and common work. Watch this space for developments.

Former WATER Interns **Lanell Dike**, **Siy Sakamoto** and **Monique Miyake Maier** graced the WOC meeting with their enthusiastic presence. They were seen everywhere they were needed: greeting people at the Women-Church Convergence booth, caring for WATER-baby **Cecilia Anne**, extending **Diann Neu's** right arm in a dozen directions. Rumor has it former interns are planning a joint return to the WATER office in June to renew acquaintances and continue their fine work. Inform the office if you will be among them.



Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual  
8035 13th Street, Silver Spring, MD 20910-4803 USA

Return Postage Guaranteed

Non-profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Silver Spring, MD  
Permit No. 1701

## Inside

Editorial, 1  
All Our Children, 1  
In the Beginning..., 3  
A Welcoming and Naming Ceremony for a Child, 4  
In Memory of Her, 6  
The Mother's Fund Update, 6  
Generous Donors, 6  
Ubiquitous Co-directors, 6  
Resources, 7  
News and Notes, 8

## Complimentary

To Share With A Friend

Donors to WATER receive WATERwheel free.

*WATERwheel Vol. 8, No. 4, Winter 1995-6*