



water wheel

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

Editorial

As organizations mature, they, like the people who comprise them, lose friends along the way. So this season WATER lost a stalwart volunteer, **Margot Fletcher Clark**, a good friend. Hers was a quiet presence among us - a participant in local programs over the years, a weekly volunteer in the office, a monthly pledger, someone whose prayers we always knew were with us.

Her death was not the stuff of media attention like Cardinal Joseph Bernardin's in Chicago recently. But it reminds us that religious leaders come in all hues and hers was lovely. May she rest in the peace she so richly deserves.

Shortly before his death, the Cardinal began a much lauded project to bring together Catholics of diverse opinions, and heaven knows that there are diverse opinions among Catholics. What is less clear is whether such projects are really a step forward, or whether they risk setting the parameters too narrowly and still being perceived as progress. So far it appears to be a gathering of mostly middle ground folks since people who believe strongly that reproductive health, homosexuality and the ordination of women are important are conspicuous by their absence. Time will tell and we will be watching.

A new year dawns. Soon we move to Volume X of this publication, with the promise of another cumulative index and more projects. It is good to have new friends join us as we treasure the memories of those who have gone ahead.



To Your Health

by Mary E. Hunt

A spirited "To your health" toast is easy to propose but difficult to accomplish, especially if you are a woman. I used to think that theology was an inexact science until I started to pay attention to medicine. Talk about a lucky guess on a good day... The human body and we in it are so complex that even the most highly trained doctors, most insightful nurses, most practiced massage therapists swing between the art of healing and the science of medicine like acrobats on the high wire without a net. I appreciate and admire their daring.

The growing literature about women's health reveals just how little has been researched and what even less is known when it comes to the female of the species. A large study of women, the Women's Health Initiative sponsored by the National Institutes of Health, which is expected to finish in the first decade of the next century, may increase exponentially what is known about

Alzheimer's for what is now an indecent interval with no earthly explanation that makes me query the whole business. Maybe it is just being human.

My concern is what we can bring from feminist sources in religion that might be helpful in setting priorities, making decisions, and finally, of course, propelling us toward good health. Many people live with disabling conditions, and all of us have some form of illness, injury or accident during our lifetimes. Feminist work in religion will not prevent such occurrences. But those of us whose faith and work is informed by feminist insights need to plumb our beliefs to see what resources we have for coping.

Moreover, we need to gird up such resources in the public debate and insist without ceasing that embodied beings, persons, deserve health care because we are embodied, not because we have jobs with insurance or are related to people

Three things we have learned in feminist work in religion provide a good basis for starting this conversation: access, agency and attention.

women's bodies beyond their reproductive capacity.** Happily, in addition to details on the body, the study includes questions about quality of life - religion, clubs, pets, relationships - which will help both to predict and to prescribe good health in the future.

In the meantime, feminist theo-ethical scrutiny is needed here as we try to make the Spanish toast, "Salud," literally, "health," a reality at a time when managed care, rationed resources and, to my mind, inverted priorities keep so many people from it.

In the interest of full disclosure, I had better admit that it may be the inevitable worries of middle age prompting me to think about this topic. Exercise-induced aches take longer to heal than they did two decades ago; energy is high but not boundless. Or, perhaps it is having an octogenarian mother who languishes with

who do. This peculiar notion that health care is a privilege, not a right, is particularly pernicious in the United States, but even in countries which currently provide health care across the board the trend is a slippery slope downward toward the U.S. model.

Major advances in pharmacology, technology and research mask the fact that good health is a blessing, a matter of genes, self and medical care, and good luck. Many people with serious medical conditions enjoy good health in that they, not their conditions, but **they** as human beings, are treated with respect, fairness, competence and compassion. The "good" for them is how they are treated, and it is a good that belongs to the common good though it is conspicuously missing for many people now.

Women are especially hard put, as the same (continued on page 2)

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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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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.

To Your Health

(continued from page 1)

sexism that considers us inferior in other realms operates in medicine. For instance, heart disease, long considered a male, stress-related problem, goes undetected in women such that 8% more women than men die within the first year after a heart attack. Then there is "Don't bother your pretty little head about your breast, dear. I'll worry about that." Research protocols for women and research priorities for women's health issues remain scandalously few and far between. Three things we have learned in feminist work in religion provide a good basis for starting this conversation: access, agency and attention.

Access is key. Justice demands and bodies need access to the constitutive elements of good health: clean water and nutrition, exercise and relaxation, competent health care. But when these are rationed strictly on economic, gender and racial terms it is no wonder that morbidity and mortality statistics parallel kyriarchal lines. Feminist religious commitments to maximize access and to share resources equitably are put to the test in health care.

Even for those with access, managed care is a mixed blessing. The big fear used to be over-treatment, too many procedures, excess testing, guinea pigs galore. But now the opposite is be-

ment are coded? Such knowledge will not stem the tide, but it is transferable when it comes to changing the power equation. At least it is a place to start. Feminist faith commitments are, if nothing else, useful.

Agency is not a word people commonly associate with health in what used to be a "doctor knows best culture." Then again it was not a word people associated with religion either until the various liberation schools came along. It derives from the Latin *agere*, "to drive, lead, put forth," so it makes perfect sense that one is in control, in the driver's seat, of her own body, her own spirit. Not. Just as many ministers, rabbis and priests have thought of themselves as the Divine's voice on earth, so, too, many medical professionals, especially doctors (who would single out surgeons?), have confused their role as healers with the primary focus on the one who is healing, namely, the patient.

Many progressive health care people believe in the primacy of the patient, and some medical education is beginning to incorporate this belief, but it is hard in the practical order to persuade some physicians to spend the time it takes to listen and learn from their patients. It is as if they can't spell the other form of that word. Enter: managed care where harried doctors are allotted a set time for patient interactions. But it makes me appreciate anew my own primary care doctor who was trained in India. When I

Doctor-centered medicine is no more adequate than clergy-centered religion.

coming true, with health maintenance organizations under pressure for allegedly having forbidden doctors to discuss treatment options the systems will not cover. Even if this is not a widespread problem, it is heart breaking to know (and death dealing to experience) that treatments exist which will improve quality and/or save lives but that cannot be accessed because of money. Admittedly this is not a new problem, but it is renewed as advances continue.

Protease inhibitors or the so-called "drug cocktail" used effectively in some cases to treat HIV/AIDS are one such example. Andrew Sullivan writes poignantly of the situation faced by some affluent gay men with good insurance who, because of the cocktail, have been given a reprieve, however temporary, from their death sentence. Few poor women with dependent children who are HIV infected will have access to these drugs in the next few years. In this case, some men's new angst is many poor women's end.

Of course no one would suggest taking drugs from some because all cannot have them, but how do we deal with the hard fact that underlying assumptions about access are coded with regard to gender, class and race in the same way that access to education, ordination or employ-

ment are coded? Such knowledge will not stem the tide, but it is transferable when it comes to changing the power equation. At least it is a place to start. Feminist faith commitments are, if nothing else, useful.

Agency works both ways. It must be hard for a doctor to deal with a patient whose health habits are lacking. What do you say to a life-long smoker when you deliver the diagnosis of emphysema? Do you tell a serious drinker that liver disease in her case could have been prevented? Still, the benefits of being in charge outweigh the costs, especially when we think of ourselves as body-spirits who pay attention.

Another component of agency is its diversity. Allied health professionals, especially nurses, physicians' assistants, physical therapists, laboratory workers and the like are all part of the team. Doctor-centered medicine is no more adequate than clergy-centered religion. As religious feminists we stress the primacy of community; so too in medicine the team is all.

A third watchword in feminist religious parlance that has its medical value is **attention**, a word I sometimes substitute for spirituality, or, (continued on page 3)

paying attention. French philosopher and activist Simone Weil wrote: "Those who are unhappy have no need of anything in this world but people capable of giving them their attention. The capacity to give one's attention to a sufferer is a very rare and difficult thing; it is almost a miracle; it is a miracle." So those who choose the medical world for their work struggle with how to attend to the rest of us, miraculous as it may seem.

Attention, too, comes in various guises. When asked what they want most from their health care providers, people say accurate information and compassion, that is, good data and a warm word of encouragement. I am still struck by it when I hear a nurse say cheerily, "I hope you'll feel better" to the coughing, sneezing flu victim who is shuffling out the door. But I can see from the poor soul's face that the word, the attention, was as valuable as the prescription. Sounds simple, but note the next time you are in the situation how rarely it happens. Attention.

Attention to tough decisions is the crux of current health care debates. Whom to treat and how, whether to treat and when, lurk behind the scenes. Set these sticky wickets in the complex of a fundamentally unlevel playing field and the dilemmas come fast and furious. Which patients receive priority for organ transplants, which fetuses to treat, how old is old enough, when to leave well enough alone? These border on the theological, questions for which no one has a good answer and even fewer people really want responsibility for the decisions. Attention is not wasted on those who step into the breach with their skills and their intuitions, and who agonize in the clinic and more so later that same evening as they toss and turn.

Focus on access, agency and attention has begun a transformation in patriarchal religions. We must do more than pray that the same thing will happen in medicine. Religious groups can put health care at the top of their lists of social concerns, add their voices to the debates, bring the resources of their traditions to the tough decisions, encourage their people to participate as body-spirits in their own and other peoples' care. But prayer, as scientific studies have shown, can't hurt.

** Call the Women's Health Initiative, 800 54-WOMEN (800 549-6636), for more information on joining the study of women over 50 years old. Women in their 60's and 70's are especially welcome, as are African American, Native American and Asian American women.

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



Cecilia Communion

- I. Wonder
One-toothed
chewing life, watching
wide-eyed, catching
even the drips

- II. She descends from her throne
surveying the queendom
worldly goods
stacked
in a heap
kneeling
she offers up treasure
any who stoop
receive

- III. Unceasing
Echolalia
Holy Praise
Uttered
Ebenezar

- Cynthia Lapp, July 1996

Cindy is Staff Assistant at WATER and mother of our "child in residence." She wrote this poem as part of her studies for an MTS at Wesley Theological Seminary.

A Shared Garden in Washington, DC

WATER will host the second seminar of a new joint project, **A Shared Garden: Women, Spiritualities, Ethics and Theologies**, in Washington next June 16-27. The program is co-sponsored by Con-spirando in Santiago, Chile, and Colectivo Pe No Chao with Ivone Gebara in Recife, Brazil. A group of 20 women from both continents will spend the two weeks looking closely at the theme "Beyond Violence: Solidarity and Ecofeminism." The aim is to develop resources, analyses, liturgies and materials which can be used by participants when they return to their respective homes.

The first seminar is taking place in Santiago, Chile, in January 1997 with mostly Latin Americans from more than seven countries and a few North Americans. The U.S. program will draw primarily from the north with a few sisters from the south to strengthen the ties. The Washington segment promises to be a powerful and pleas-

ant time, with opportunities to visit the nation's capital and its many attractions, use WATER's resources, connect with other local groups as appropriate, and get to know women from various parts of the two continents who are engaged in this work.

Tuition for the program will be \$450. Participants are responsible for their own transportation and housing. WATER will help with local housing for those who need it. Some limited scholarship assistance is available but you are advised to seek support first from the local community to which you will return with the first fruits of this Garden.

If you would like to apply, send a stamped self-addressed envelope to: WATER Garden, 8035 13th Street, Silver Spring, MD 20910 USA. We will send you an application form, more information on the content of the program, and more detailed information on costs.

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In Memory of Her

From Diann L. Neu:

In honor of **Frank and Mary Neu** on your 50th Wedding Anniversary. Mom and Dad, thanks for your steadfast love of one another. May you enjoy many more healthy years together.

In memory of **John A. Neu, Sr.**, well-loved and fun-loving uncle, who died before his time. Your generous heart and warm smile touched so many who will never forget you. May you rest in eternal peace with all of our ancestors.

From Mary E. Hunt:

In honor of **Elizabeth Hunt Duffy, Teresa Hunt Mangan and Charles Mellor**, good Irish aunts and uncle. Eternal rest to you all.

From WATER:

In deep gratitude for the life and work of **Margot Fletcher Clark**, a teacher, minister and sister.

In thanksgiving for **Sister Sheila McNeill**, sister of John McNeill, for her prayerful support for Christian lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered people who struggle to be church.

From Carol M. Scinto, Rockville, MD:

Remembering **Edda Pedano Barton** of Seattle WA, feisty, faithful, indomitable friend of many years, gone much too soon.

Another voice of praise for **Quentin Angus**, Wellington NZ, who transformed his physical liability into opportunity for others through his leadership in securing rights for the handicapped at home and abroad.

Menopause, a natural and momentous event in the life of the individual woman, has been neglected by society, religion, history and mythology. Women's communities around the world are reclaiming this aspect of a woman's life and marking it with a rite of passage.

Use this ceremony to honor a woman entering menopause, in the midst of menopause or at the end of menopause. It is an invitation to create a ceremony for the menopausal women in your community, perhaps for you.

Preparation

Gather four red candles, red sashes (one for each menopausal woman), purple sashes (one for each crone - a wise woman who is post-menopausal), fruit, bread, herbal tea, a bowl of water, and either flowers, a tree or fans.

Arrange a circle of chairs, one for each participant. Place a table in the center and put on it the symbols you will use for the ceremony.

Call to Gather

(A friend begins the ceremony)

Welcome, *(name the woman entering menopause)*, to your rite of passage, a pathway to empowerment. Today we honor you and witness to your change of life as you enter menopause. We acknowledge that menopause is a natural and momentous event in the life of every woman even though it has been so neglected by society, mythology, history and religion. We mark your change and every woman's changes. We are women who live out our cycles of birth, menstruation, menopause and death.

Let us stand, join hands, and create a circle of celebration by singing.

Chant Together: "Women Come,"

Traditional Round

1. Women, come; friends, come;
2. Come and join our circle now,
3. Celebrate ____'s *(name of woman entering menopause)* change of life,
4. Journey through menopause.

Naming the Circle

(The friend continues)

Who are we here? With whom have we been singing? What comes to your mind when you think of menopause - your own or someone else's? To introduce yourself, speak your name and a word or phrase you associate with menopause. *(Sharing)*

The Rite of Passage

(A menopausal woman explains menopause)

Menopause is all of what we have said and more. Translated from the Greek, menopause is "menos" and "pauein." "Menos" means month and "pauein" means to cause to cease. Webster defines menopause as the permanent

cessation of menstruation, normally between the ages of 45 and 50; change of life.

This is a time in a woman's life when the blood that was available for giving life to others is now held within as wise blood to nurture oneself and renew the earth. The menopausal woman is freed from birth control, from menstrual periods, and perhaps from the emotional swings of the reproductive years. Now she may be free to pursue interests that formerly eluded her: travel, hobbies, painting, writing, another language, music, art, study, reading.

This is a critical turning point in a woman's life cycle, equal in significance to the menarche, the first orgasm, or, for some, the birthing of a baby. For many it becomes the beginning of self-discovery; for others, it marks a crisis. Shifting into a new phase of being may bring fears and anxieties. Yet women can be energized and transformed during this change of life.

Chant: "Woman I Am," Traditional

Woman I am, Spirit I am,
I am the infinite within my soul
I have no beginning, and I have no end,
All this I know.

Candle Lighting

(The menopausal woman lights the four red candles, saying something such as)

I light four red candles to mark four aspects of my bleeding.

(Lighting the first candle)

For the bloods that have ceased flowing from me.

(Lighting the second candle)

For the children, the health, the creativity that the red river of life brought me.

(Lighting the third candle)

For the passions of my womanhood.

(Lighting the fourth candle)

For the wise blood that stays within me to deepen self-discovery.

Purification

(Another friend takes a bowl of water from the table and says:)

As we stand with *(name of the woman entering menopause)* at a new threshold of womanhood, let us purify our thoughts, our words, our hearts of all negativity around menopause. Pass the bowl of water, dip your hands in it. Touch your forehead, your mouth, your heart and cleanse yourself of negative energy.

Honoring Menopausal Women

(A young woman says:)

We recognize those women among us who are in the midst of menopause and those who have journeyed through menopause to become crones. You are the elders who reveal to us the fullness of womanhood. You do it with grace and beauty.

Change of Life:

by Diann L. Neu

(She calls out the name of each crone first, then names each menopausal woman, naming the newest last.)

(For the crone)

(Name), receive this purple sash as an outward sign of your inner wisdom. (Give her the sash as a stole or tie it around her waist.)

(For the menopausal woman)

(Name), receive this red sash as an outward sign of the withdrawal of the flowing blood from you. (Give her the sash as a stole or tie it around her waist.)

Hymn of Praise

(The woman entering menopause invites the other menopausal women and crones to join her)

Menopausal sisters and wise crones, join me in a "Hymn of Praise." The rest of you, please respond after each invocation, "we thank you."

Praise to you, Source of Life, for placing within me the ebb and flow of life forever and ever.

Source of Life, **we thank you.**

Praise to you, Sophia-Wisdom, for creating me in your image.

Sophia-Wisdom, **we thank you.**

Praise to you, Wellspring of Life, for the flowering of my creative gifts.

Wellspring of Life, **we thank you.**

Praise to you, Womb of the Universe, for my connection to all living things.

Womb of Life, **we thank you.**

Song: "May You Walk" by Marsie Silvestro, from **On the Other Side**, c 1993.

May you walk in the ways of the women who went before you.

And may you hear their voices rise -
like the wind that gently shakes you.

And know that you are not alone -
for we all go with each other.

Yes, know that you are not alone -
as you seek with courage your path.

Readings: from **Women of the 14th Moon**, ed. by Dena Taylor & Amber Coverdale Sumrall, c 1991.

(Women of different generations read.)

From "Indian Summer" by Ruth Levitan:

I carry my climate with me now,
Muggy as a summer storm,
the unsettled weather
of changing seasons
dampens my skin,

Journey Through Menopause



reminds me I have survived
the prickly heat of childhood,
flush of first pubescence,
furnaces of passion.
This new heat
tells me that life
with all its hungers, angers, loves,
still glows, radiates,
burns within me.

Chant: "The Power Moves" by Laura Brearley, c 1993.

The power moves through the seasons turning
The power moves through the earth and the sun
The power moves through the ancient learning
The power moves through everyone

From "Grandmother Lodge" by Brook Medicine Eagle:

When you pass beyond menopause, you have the opportunity for a renewed and deeply powerful experience of yourself. As you drop away from the silliness and fear that has been generated by the "over the hill" cultural trance, and open yourself to the truth that lives within you - body and spirit - you will find an incredible challenge - a challenge for which you are better equipped than any other two-legged. You have the opportunity to sit in council, and using the power of the blood held among you, create a harmonious world around you.

From Margaret Mead:

The most creative force in the world is the menopausal woman with zest.

From Germaine Greer:

What I want to do is draw middle-aged women out of their purdah, make them really joyous. Menopause is the invisible experience. People don't want to hear about it. But this is the time

when everything comes good for you - your humor, your style, your bad temper.

Chant: "The Power Moves"

Telling the Stories

(The menopausal woman introduces the storytelling)

Sisters, friends, we need to tell one another our stories of menopause. What have you experienced going through menopause? What questions do you have about menopause? Let us take a moment to think about these experiences and questions. *(Pause)* Let us share with one another our wisdom and questions about menopause. *(Sharing)*

Presentation of Symbols

(Choose one of the following symbols that is appropriate for the woman you are honoring, or use another. Place the symbol on a table in the center of the circle.)

Flowers

(The woman entering menopause gives a flower to each participant and thanks each for the special gifts and knowledge they have given her while they shared bleeding times.)

or

(A daughter, son, grandchild, godchild or child close to the menopausal woman places on the woman's head a garland of flowers or gives her a bouquet of herbs, saying:)

Mother *(or name of the woman)*, you give me life. Thank you for your love, your wisdom and your advice.

A Tree

(The woman entering menopause holds a seedling or other tree ready for planting)

Trees symbolize connections between roots below which reach to the depths of the earth where life begins and ends, and the canopy above which stretches to the expanse of the universe where life is visible. May those of you who come after me find nourishment in this tree's beauty and be comforted under its shade. In my youth I cared for trees my ancestors planted. Now I plant trees for those who will come after me. May my spirit continue growing through the life of this young tree. *(She and her friends plant her chosen tree in a special place.)*

Fans

(One woman picks up a fan and says:)
Fans are appropriate symbols for menopause. The fan can bring a cool breeze to hot flesh. It

can provide air to a fire to make the embers glow more strongly.

Take a fan and create a breeze for our menopausal women. *(Fanning)*

(Name the woman), may gentle winds and cool breezes comfort you.

Blessing the Fruit

(Someone takes a bowl of fresh fruit and presents it to the group, saying:)

Please repeat after me.

Blessed are you, Source of Life, *(Echo)*

Blessed is the fruit of your womb. *(Echo)*

(She takes a piece of fruit and passes the bowl for each one to select a piece and eat.)

Blessing the Bread

(Someone takes the loaf of freshly baked bread and presents it to the group, saying:)

Please repeat after me.

Blessed are you, Bread of Life, *(Echo)*

Blessed are those who nourish others. *(Echo)*

(She breaks a piece of bread and passes the loaf for each one to take a piece and eat.)

Blessing the Tea

(Someone takes a cup of herbal tea and presents it to the group, saying:)

Please repeat after me.

Blessed are you, Calming Healer, *(Echo)*

Blessed are the creators and caretakers of life. *(Echo)*

(She sips the tea and passes the cup for each one to take a sip.)

Blessing One Another

(The woman being honored says:)

A ceremony like this reminds us that we are connected to all women - those who do not yet bleed, those who bleed, and those who no longer bleed. Please repeat after me.

Blessed are you, Connector of All, *(Echo)*

Blessed is the community of women. *(Echo)*

Let us share a blessing with one another.

(She begins the blessing by hugging the women next to her and invites others to do the same.)

Song and Spiral Dance: "Woman I Am"

Sending One Another Forth

(A friend says:)

Let us go forth from this ceremony filled with the life-giving power of this community.

Let us go forth strengthened by witnessing the change of life through menopause of *(name the woman just honored)*.

Let us go forth empowered to journey through our own life cycle transitions.

Amen. Blessed Be. Let It Be So.

Diann L. Neu, MDiv, STM, MSW, feminist liturgist and psychotherapist co-directs WATER.

Network of Feminist Liberation Theologians

Good news on the Network front. Two religious orders, the Loretto Community and the School Sisters of Notre Dame, included this project in their justice funding. Their contributions allow us to make it part of our regular programming and move ahead.

To wit: check our Web page for information on relevant issues such as the latest books in the field and upcoming meetings of note. For those on the list, we will set up a separate e-mail list for announcements. If we do not have your e-mail address, please send it post haste. Fear not if technology is not your mode; we will do periodic mailings as well to the rest, but we try to save trees and stamps when possible via the electronic route.

Testing one, two... We plan a meeting at next year's conference of the American Academy of Religion/Society for Biblical Literature since so many people with an interest in this prospect attend. Will you be there in San Francisco next fall? Would you come to Washington this spring for more preliminary strategizing?

This is the first of regular reports that you will find in **WATERwheel** so stay tuned. Your donation to WATER will keep you up to date.



Seed Money

WATER's annual appeal for funds (with attendant gift seed packet) should have reached your snail mailbox in December, in time for you to mail a contribution before 1997 launched a new tax cycle.

Such contributions are the sustaining force for keeping WATER works in progress and more WATER power in the pipeline. If you didn't get your check in the mail for 1996 giving, start the New Year right by writing a check to WATER and sending it today! Thanks for your seed money.

WATER co-director **Mary E. Hunt** was named Alumna of the Year by the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA, where she received her doctorate in feminist liberation theology. Congratulations, Dr. Hunt!

A busy fall at WATER found **Patricia Horsley** back from Australia for a sojourn through New England and a stop in Silver Spring. She reminds us of all the spirited colleagues in Oz whose work inspires us. Ditto for **Rosemary Neave** from the Women's Resource Center in New Zealand. She and **Ngairé Broder** brought greetings from those creative women. Swedish doctoral student **Ann Cathrin Jarl** shared her concerns about feminist theology and economics at another turn around the lunch table. **Madeleine Tonnies**, another Swede, spent two days in the office researching her dissertation on lesbian feminist theology.

Programs aplenty: The series on **feminist ministry**, including feminist approaches to pastoral counseling, preaching and just plain surviving in a bureaucracy, proved a helpful boost for local women ministers. It will make a nice week-end seminar, or better, a few sessions during the week when ministers get their days off.

The **introductory course on feminist theology** turned into a lively discussion. Now that the groundwork is set, including reading some foundational but not easy texts, folks are ready for more.

Girls spirituality is a new (and talk about lively!) experiment. The office comes alive on Monday late afternoons when the girls arrive with music, paints, prayers and most of all their eager, insightful spirits. Why didn't we think of this earlier, and why didn't it exist when we were girls? **Diann Neu** and **Ann Gordon** are busy keeping one step ahead of their young colleagues.

The **feminist spirituality group** paid attention to spiritual life by focusing on and ritualizing spiritual traditions, names of the divine, work, ritual, holidays, risk-taking, and closures. This is the group that keeps on meeting!

The **feminist liturgies** celebrated the energies of this Fall. In October, "Deep Peace of the Changing Seasons to You;" in November, "Blessed Be the Turning into Darkness;" and in December, "Come Sister Wisdom: An Advent Blessing."

WATER celebrated the publication of the **DIC-TIONARY OF FEMINIST THEOLOGIES** edited by Letty Russell and Shannon Clarkson. Local colleagues **Sharon Ringe**, **Katarina von Kellenbach**, **Gail Unterberger** and **Mary**

Hunt, who have entries in the book, discussed their work with a group of WATER friends at a tea-time gathering.

LEAP workers are back at WATER. These colleagues are in a training program for people with disabilities. They grace the WATER office to help with mailings and to add enthusiastic energy as they prepare for the work force. They prepared the end-of-the-year funding letter to you. Thank you LEAP!

WATER staff kept busy on the road: **Diann Neu** and **Mary Hunt** made a presentation at the American Academy of Religion (AAR) in New Orleans on "Community-based Scholars" for the Women's Caucus pre-conference workshop for graduate students and others looking for jobs. They talked about WATER of course, but mainly underscored how necessary it is to start new centers, to do work that is accountable to a larger community rather than simply a denomination or a tenure committee. They stressed that it is hard work, but fulfilling as can be, and counseled people to do as much as their nerves and pocketbooks would allow, since the only hard part is paying for it.

Another WATER intervention at the AAR was **Mary Hunt's** paper in the section on Roman Catholic Studies, "A Mixed Blessing: The Ordination of Roman Catholic Women to the Priesthood." She argued that ordination is coming sooner than people think, and that it will serve to reify and shore up kyriarchal structures of clericalism. Mary called for substantive changes in the model of church, a move in the direction of egalitarian base communities in which baptism is the primary sacrament for ministry. Much discussion, needless to say, but it raised the question of feminist models of ministry as finally much more threatening to kyriarchy than ordaining women.

Diann Neu led two workshops on "Creating Feminist Liturgies" and co-planned a feminist liturgy entitled "Thanks to Valiant Catholic Women" at the Call to Action Conference in Detroit. A group of **WATER e-mail folks** gathered for an informal breakfast meeting at CTA. They voiced delight in seeing face to face people with whom they usually correspond through WATER's e-mail list.

Mary Hunt participated in a fascinating consultation on religion and violence against women which was held in Toronto November 16-19. Part of the World Council of Churches' Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, it was sponsored by the Canadian and U.S. Councils of Churches and the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence.

Resources

Abrahamsen, Valerie A. **WOMEN AND WORSHIP AT PHILIPPI: DIANA/ARTEMIS AND OTHER CULTS IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN ERA.** Portland, ME: Astarte Shell Press, 1995 (300 pages, \$16.95).

Women at Philippi in the first century C.E. reveal a great deal about women's religious agency in that period.

Alexander, Marilyn Bennett and James Preston. **WE WERE BAPTIZED TOO: CLAIMING GOD'S GRACE FOR LESBIANS AND GAYS.** Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996 (139 pages, \$17)

Sad that such a book needs to be written, but the witness of baptized lesbian and gay people is powerful in the face of institutionalized homophobia.

Boerresen, Kari Elisabeth, editor. **THE IMAGE OF GOD: GENDER MODELS IN JUDEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITION.** Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995 (291 pages, \$21).

This English edition of a Norwegian text is a firm foundation for new attempts to decenter the gender of the divine.

Childers, Jana L. and Lucy A. Rose. **THE ABINGDON WOMEN'S PREACHING ANNUAL (Series 1 Year B).** Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996 (159 pages, \$16.95).

Useful for preachers in churches that stick close to the texts and that need a gentle but firm tug in the direction of inclusivity.

Chittister, Joan. **BEYOND BEIJING: THE NEXT STEP FOR WOMEN.** Kansas City, MO: Sheed and Ward, 1996 (192 pages, \$15.95).

This personal journal reads like a travel novel complete with stalled trains, exotic foods and health problems. But it is a compelling account of the Fourth UN Conference on Women held in Beijing, and the women who made it happen despite great odds.

Comstock, Gary David. **UNREPENTANT, SELF-AFFIRMING, PRACTICING: LESBIAN/BISEXUAL/GAY PEOPLE WITHIN ORGANIZED RELIGION.** New York: Continuum, 1996 (329 pages, \$29.95).

A compendium of information on how certain believers see religions, not how religions see some of their most faithful adherents. Good show!

Gold, Victor R. et al. **THE NEW TESTAMENT AND PSALMS: AN INCLUSIVE VERSION.** New York: Oxford University Press, 1995 (535 pages, \$14.95).

A contemporary translation which models by its language the kind of inclusive churches and society we need at century's end.

Harris, Maria. **PROCLAIM JUBILEE! A SPIRITUALITY FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY.** Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996 (128 pages, \$12.95).

In her usual lucid, simple style Maria Harris sketches a plan for moving lightly into the next century. Lovely, useful, artful.

Hamington, Maurice. **HAIL MARY? THE STRUGGLE FOR ULTIMATE WOMANHOOD IN CATHOLICISM.** New York: Routledge, 1995 (216 pages, \$16.95).

A good overview of feminist problems with promises of Mary in contemporary Catholicism.

Katz, Jane. **MESSENGERS OF THE WIND: NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN TELL THEIR LIFE STORIES.** New York: Ballantine Books, 1995 (317 pages, \$12).

With all of the faux Native American materials in vogue it is good to have this clear version of the real thing.

Meyer-Wilmes, Hedwig. **REBELLION ON THE BORDERS: FEMINIST THEOLOGY BETWEEN THEORY AND PRAXIS.** Kampen, The Netherlands: Kok Pharos (261 pages, \$50).

The author provides a look at how feminist theory and praxis overlap and why this approach is so useful. A critical response to its postmodern despisers.

Newman, Leslea, editor. **MY LOVER IS A WOMAN: CONTEMPORARY LESBIAN LOVE POEMS.** New York: Ballantine Books (240 pages, \$18).

Lovely, provocative, stirring, startling, made all the more wonderful by WATER's computer consultant Jessica Weissman's debut as a published poet.

Ranft, Patricia. **WOMEN AND THE RELIGIOUS LIFE IN PREMODERN EUROPE.** New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996 (159 pages, \$39.95)

An historical primer on the role of women in communities from a respectful, helpful perspective.

Robb, Carol S. **EQUAL VALUE: AN ETHICAL APPROACH TO ECONOMICS AND SEX.** Boston: Beacon Press, 1996 (208 pages, \$25)

A good start on a very complicated topic. Sure to spur others to take up the work.



Weems, Renita J. **BATTERED LOVE: MARRIAGE, SEX, AND VIOLENCE IN THE HEBREW PROPHETS.** Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995 (150 pages, \$14).

A must read in the field of religion and violence; a challenging approach to biblical scholarship. Dr. Weems lays out the case for some religious language and imagery doing more harm than good.

Other Resources

LORD, HEAR OUR PRAYERS: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WORSHIP MATERIALS. Compiled by Kathy Shantz, published by Mennonite Central Committee, Canada, 1994 (78 pages, \$5).

A resource every denomination should emulate. Well written (despite some male language for the divine) and user friendly, this book gives pastors a place to start.

THAT ALL MAY WORSHIP: AN INTERFAITH WELCOME TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES. National Organization on Disability, 910 16th Street NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20006, 1996 (52 pages, \$10 with discount for volume buying).

A must-read resource for all who intend to worship in ways that include everyone. A well thought-out manual with concrete suggestions.

Note: Previously reviewed **TOWARDS A FEMINIST CHRISTOLOGY** by Julia M. Hopkins is now available in paperback from Eerdmans, 134 pages, \$15.

Tapes

ANCIENT MOTHER and **FROM THE GODDESS** include songs and chants from around the world and across time. Available from Spring Hill Music, PO Box 800, Boulder, CO 80306 (\$12 for cassette; \$18 for CD).

IN SEARCH OF WISDOM is a lovely collection of songs for liturgies and inspirational enjoyment from the Daughters of Wisdom, Wisdom House, 229 East Litchfield Rd, Litchfield, CT 06759 (Cassette \$10).

Technology Update

We continue to grow in the ways of technology. That requires changes, and changes can be confusing, so note well the following E-mail addresses:

Messages to WATER: water@hers.com

Personal messages to Diann Neu:
dneu@hers.com

Personal messages to Mary Hunt:
mhunt@her.com

You can join WATER's popular e-mail list, a weekly update on WATER activities and assorted other news, by sending a message to:

majordomo@hers.com with the words "subscribe water" in the body of the message. To get off the list, send a message to majordomo@hers.com with the words "unsubscribe water" in the body.

To post a message to the whole list, not to the WATER office or to Mary Hunt but to the **whole** list (some 300 people around the world, so be sure it is not an invitation to dinner), post to water-l@hers.com. Note that this is a change from before, so please be careful.

The most common mistake is to read something exciting in the WATER Update and want to respond to the office or to Mary Hunt, who writes it diligently each week. Great instinct, but be sure not simply to press the "Reply" function because then your reply will go to the whole list when you intend it for one person. Should this happen, or if there are the inevitable other little glitches, please be patient and polite as we all learn how to use this technology. Remember, a few of the horses on the Pony Express went the wrong way, too.

WATER on the Web

We are happy to announce that the WATER web page is ready to roll. By early in 1997 you should be able to find it at:

<http://www.hers.com/water>

We're delighted to have this as a vehicle for communication with you, so let us know what would be useful to you on it. You will find pro-

gram information, background materials on staff, and other relevant matter.

Thanks to Kelly Cregan and Jessica Weissman for keeping up the technological pace for us, and to Debby LaFontaine for help on the hardware side.

The Copier Cometh

Thanks to your generous donations, the new copier is chugging away. Suggested names included MultiSophia, Fidelia, WATERmark (twice), Axle (to keep the WATERwheel turning), cope (coip), Scribess, Maris, Mufida (Arabic for helper), Zelda, Betty Crocker(!) and Hildegard. We've decided to live with Spigot, Ellen Wright's way of saying "keep WATER flowing." (We catch ourselves referring to "Miss Spiggy.")

The many interesting suggestions are much appreciated, and we think of each contributor as our (comparatively) marvelous machine pours forth its reproductions.



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