Thank You, Justice-seeking Friends, for Making a Difference at WATER in 2019!

You have provided life-giving support to many people worldwide by partnering with WATER to sustain our vital 2019 programs. In these difficult times, people depend on feminist religious hope and values to fuel the struggles for social and religious change. Here are three hopes you help us offer!


WATERalls, WATERrituals, WATERmeditations, and WATERcounseling—all our monthly programs—gather people on the phone from West Virginia, Iowa, Boston, Philadelphia, Canada, Viet Nam, New York, North Carolina, Chicago, Germany, and so many more cities and countries. All are welcome to phone in or come to the WATEROFFICE.

We spend endless hours consulting with colleagues, religious leaders, interns, students, and religious communities on projects, analysis, sticky situations, and so much more.

May we count on you to continue your support of WATER for 2020? Let your New Year be the best ever by giving a gift that brings joy, hope, and promise to generations. Thank you.

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Who We Are

WATER is a global interreligious network, an educational and spiritual space, a center for dialogue on feminism, faith, and justice. We connect activists, religious leaders, students, scholars, and allies who are using feminist religious values to create social and religious change. Founded in 1983 by Mary E. Hunt and Diann L. Neu, we have been empowering people to address structural violence for over thirty-five years—making WATER one of the oldest feminist religious non-profit organizations in the world.

Join the WATER community as we work toward inclusive theologies and rituals, push for social and religious change, and collaborate from inclusive perspectives. To learn more about what we do, visit us at www.waterwomensalliance.org.

Mary E. Hunt, Diann L. Neu: Co-directors  |  Techika Rhodes: Intern  |  Hannah Dorfman, Emily Neufeld: Staff  |  Joe Scinto: Volunteer

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LITURGY IS NOT NEUTRAL

By Mary E. Hunt

Most people experience religion through liturgy and ritual far more than by paying attention to theology and ethics, or so we have learned at WATER. Everyone experiences life’s ups and downs—doubt, loss, love, illness, joy, justice. The publication (February 2020) of Diann L. Neu’s Stirring Waters: Feminist Liturgies for Justice provides an opportunity to underscore the importance of worship and spirituality resources. Far from the tired, often exclusive notion to mention boring offerings of many mainline traditions, these liturgies need no translation into inclusive/expansive language. They are reliably located in intersectional analysis, and they lift up the sacred potential of those whom religious and secular powers cast to the margins.

At WATER, as Diann’s liturgies reflect, people are encouraged to shape their own ways of being religious in concert with other seekers who want their faith expressions to cohere with their inclusive, Earth-loving politics. The two are not mutually exclusive. Everyone experiences the illness of a child or loved one, the death of a parent, the need for role models who look like us, and so many other exigencies for which creative, empowering, nurturing liturgies and rituals are a necessary balm and stimulus for action. Over WATER’s first thirty-five years, we have used the privilege that accrues to white, US-based, cis-gender, well-educated, economically comfortable people to overcome oppression. That is our work, to change the conditions of inequality and exclusion. WATER includes many people of color, folks from all over the world speaking many languages, trans people, elderly persons, those living with disabilities, immigrants, and those made poor by global capitalism and greed. Together, we take every opportunity to “Step into the Pool,” as Diann suggests. Invoking names like Malala, Sally Ride, Sojourner Truth, Comadres, Catherine of Sienna, feminist ministers, and progressive government leaders reinforces our activism and frames our commitments.

“Dignity to Decide” Award

Dr. Mary E. Hunt and Dr. Cynthia R. Greenlee were honored by the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice with their inaugural “Dignity to Decide” award given November 25, 2019 at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) in San Diego, CA.

Mary is a feminist, theologian, and Catholic active in the women’s church movement who writes on theology and ethics with particular attention to social justice concerns. Cynthia is a writer, historian, and journalist who specializes in African American women’s and legal history of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Human trafficking, racism, the need for peace, sexual and domestic violence, and HIV/AIDS are just a sample of contemporary challenges. Stirring WATERs addresses. WATER liturgies are designed to demonstrate how useful prayer can be for people who are deeply engaged in social change work. At the same time, Diann wisely weaves in celebrations of friendship, mother-daughter bonds, and fun to help communities balance struggles and hopes. Many groups use these popular prayers, or similar rituals modeled on them, as they engage in civil disobedience, ecfflent resistance, and organized persistence.

The need for healing and the power of imagination leads to services that focus on the wisdom that accrues in everyday life, the seasons, the New Year, Thanksgiving, and Earth Day. Taking time to set a simple, lovely table, to gather friends, colleagues, and family, always including anyone who might be left aside brings into focus the human right to a safe, enjoyable, common life lived with attention and according to the local culture.

Empowering resources are needed to reclaim and refresh our voices as we strive to change this common aspect of the human condition. Unfortunately, some violent religious imagery and symbolism, prejudiced preaching, and music that reinforces top-down, over-against attributes of the divine (Ruler, King, Judge) are both symptoms and cause of violence.

The rush to the doors of many mainline religious institutions does not mean postmodern people are not religious. It means that they take their spirituality too seriously to waste time in worship that is not commensurate with the depth of their commitments and the urgency of Earth’s needs. Diann Neu’s liturgies and her encouragement for people to be proactive, agents of our own spirits, are a big step in a useful direction.

© 2019 Mary E. Hunt is Co-founder and Co-director of Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER), mhunt@hers.com

Eto (r) Rev. Dr. Cari Jackson, Dr. Mary E. Hunt, Rev. Kaddy Zeh, Interim Executive Director (former WATER intern) at the award reception.
Feminist Liberation Theologians’ Network 2019 Meeting


We heard from Australian scholar and editor Anne Elvey, Honorary Research Associate, University of Divinity and Adjunct research Fellow, Monash University, Australia as well as from Brazilian American Wanda Deifelt, professor at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa.

Their starting points in countries where fires and land misuse are rampant, tent depth and context to the ensuing conversation. It is clear that climate change is a significant factor in justice-seeking efforts worldwide with special depth and context to the ensuing conversation. It is clear that climate change is a significant factor in justice-seeking efforts worldwide with special depth and context to the ensuing conversation.

In November, M. Shawn Copeland, recently named Emerita Professor at Boston College, presented her book Knowing Christ Crucified: The Witness of African American Religious Experience. She lifted up African American history of struggle as a spiritual and political resource.

In December, Grace Kao and Rebecca Todd Peters focused their conversation on “The Failure of the Amazon Synod: Does the Catholic Church’s Patriarchal Structure Have to Do with the Failure of the Amazon Synod?” by Mary E. Hunt in Rewire News. https://rewire.news/religion-dispatches/2019/11/05/what-does-the-catholic-churchs-patriarchal-structure-have-to-do-with-the-failure-of-the-amazon-synod/