



Top l to r: Diann Neu and Victoria Rue after Victoria's premier of her play/ film, *Maryam: A Woman of Bethlehem*. Wendy Mallett, Ph.D. candidate at Yale and former WATER intern, enjoying lunch with Kelly Stewart, doctoral student at Vanderbilt. **Bottom l to r:** Rachel Bundang, adjunct professor at Santa Clara University and former WATER visiting scholar, meets Michelle Mueller, adjunct professor at Santa Clara University and former WATER intern at the "Dignity to Decide" award. Clarafrancie Cromer-Sowers, former WATER intern, and Techika Rhodes, current WATER intern, share theological reflection together. **Right:** Shannon Clarkson and Hisako Kinukawa of Tokyo, Japan at the Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network.

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!

*Diann Neu's book, **Stirring WATERS: Feminist Liturgies for Justice**, fifty-two liturgies in celebration of WATER's thirty-fifth anniversary, will be published by Liturgical Press in February 2020.*

WATERtalks, WATERrituals, WATERmeditations, and WATERcounseling -- 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 WATER office.

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 pay 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 not 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 Siena, feminist ministers, and progressive government leaders reinforces our activism and frames our commitments.

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, ecclesial 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 any 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 refocus 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 of 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

"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-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.

(l to r) Rev. Dr. Cari Jackson, Dr. Mary E. Hunt, Rev. Katey Zeh, Interim Executive Director (former WATER intern) at the award reception.



Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network 2019 Meeting

The FLTN held its 2019 meeting at the American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting in San Diego on November 22, 2019. More than fifty-five colleagues from ten countries discussed "Worldwide Climate Change: Feminist Liberation Theology Perspectives."

We heard from Australian scholar and editor Anne Elvey, Honorary Research Associate, University of Divinity and Adjunct research Fellow, Monash University, Melbourne, 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 lent depth and context to the ensuing conversation. It is clear that climate change is a significant factor in justice-seeking efforts worldwide with special impact on the lives of people who are economically poor and marginalized, especially women and children.

Full report and video are available at <http://www.waterwomensalliance.org/feminist-liberation-theologians-network/>



From l to r: Renate Jost of Germany with speaker Brazilian American Wanda Deifelt.



From l to r: Australians Kath McPhillips of New South Wales, speaker Anne Elvey of Melbourne, and Coralie Ling of St. Kilda.

Order This New Book Today! Stirring WATERS: Feminist Liturgies for Justice

By Diann L. Neu

For years, religious leaders and communities around the world have turned to the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER) for feminist liturgies for justice. Now—in celebration of the organization's thirty-fifth anniversary—Stirring Waters gathers fifty-two of these beautiful liturgies, ready-made to help your community celebrate powerful women of faith, develop a richer and deeper spirituality, and take real action for justice.

Use the liturgies in this book as a resource to nourish souls and focus passions. Reflect on great women like the prophetess Miriam and Julian of Norwich; provoke and disturb on occasions like Earth Day and World Water Day; energize on International Women's Day and Black History Month; and rejuvenate drooping spirits with liturgies of healing and gratitude. Never again will you scramble or struggle to provide community prayer that is worthwhile, nourishing, and even electrifying.

Please send ____ copies of Stirring WATERS, \$39.95 each (to be published February 2020.)

Name

Phone/Email

Address/City/State/Zip

☐ My check is enclosed. ☐ Please bill me later.

☐ I paid through PayPal via “Donate” at www.waterwomensalliance.org

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Winter WATER Program Highlights

You can find audio of programs, notes, and ritual scripts at www.waterwomensalliance.org. Register for upcoming events on our website or email waterstaff@hers.com. Join us at WATER or by phone.

WATERtalks

In October, **Bishop Karen P. Oliveto** opened a discussion about *Who's REALLY at the Table: A Queer Look at United Methodist History*. Bishop Oliveto, the first openly lesbian bishop in The United Methodist Church, discussed her experience as a lesbian in a denomination that is struggling with inclusion.

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 *Encountering the Sacred: Feminist Reflections on Women's Lives*. The essays of their colleagues dig deeply into and share broadly about key issues including friendship, death, racism, infertility, and many more.

WATERrituals

In October, **Diann L. Neu and the WATER staff** challenged us to *Break Silence to End Domestic Violence during National Domestic Violence Awareness Month*, to pray for an end to domestic violence, to commit to breaking the silence, and to unite in claiming our healing powers.

In November, **Diann L. Neu and the WATER staff** gathered us to celebrate *Gratitude for Women of Wisdom*. During the Thanksgiving season we expressed gratitude for the wise women in our lives.

In December, **Diann L. Neu and Techika Rhodes** led us in celebrating Winter Solstice Lessons and Carols. Techika played "Silent Night" on her trombone and soloed powerfully "Come and Go with Me to That Land."

WATERmeditations

In October, **Phoebe Knopf** welcomed us to pay loving attention as persistently as possible to our greatly imperiled world. We meditated with *She Who Watches*.

In November, **Cynthia Tootle** invited us into *Listening to the Songs*. She led the circle with a focus on hymns, and invited d'Arndrew Parker to sing one. As Cynthia says: "I find the hymns say everything if we would just listen."

In December, **Cheryl Nichols** shared an image from the heavens and the 14th century Hafiz poem "With That Moon Language" to invite reflection on our connectedness.

WATERcounseling

Diann L. Neu does spiritual direction, psychotherapy, clergy supervision, and pastoral counseling at WATER for individuals, couples, and groups. Call 301.589.2509 to make an appointment.

In the News

"What 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/2019/11/06/what-does-the-catholic-churchs-patriarchal-structure-have-to-do-with-the-failure-of-the-amazon-synod/>

Ritual: Grant Me Healing

By Diann L. Neu

This time calls for healing--for our countries, our relationships, and ourselves. Healing has twin aspects: restoration now and empowerment for the future. It happens within and without, making body and spirit whole together. External healing is often a sign of inner healing; inner healing reveals itself through the body. This ritual invites you to ask the Divine for healing.

Centering Prayer

Light a candle. Put your body in a comfortable prayer position.

Prayer for Healing

O God! Grant me healing.

Healing in my eyes, healing in my ears;
Healing on my skin, healing in my blood;
Healing in my hands, healing on my face;
Healing in my bones, healing within me.

Source of Life! Grant me healing.

Healing in front of me, healing behind me;
Healing above me, healing below me;
Healing on my left, healing on my right.

Wisdom Sophia! Grant me healing.

Healing in my legs, healing in my feet;
Healing in my breasts (or where they used to be);
Healing in my uterus (or where it used to be);
Healing on my tongue; healing in my lungs.

Spirit of Grace! Grant me healing.

Healing in front of me, healing behind me;
Healing above me, healing below me;
Healing in my body, healing in my soul.

Companion on the Journey! Grant me healing.

Reflect \ Meditate \ Journal

Hug yourself. Think of an image of healing: a waterfall, a sunrise, a sparkling ocean, a burning candle, a wishing well, salt water, a gentle rain, or another. Visualize your image. Take time to visualize your healing.

Take Action

Take a healing bath. Put a sacred symbol – prayer beads, rosary, Tibetan bowl, shells, or another – in or near the bath water. Add lavender bath oil or bath salts to the water. Play your favorite calming music. Light candles. Ease your body into the water and soak in the healing.

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