

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

Making Moral Sense Before, During and After AIDS

by Mary E. Hunt

More Power With WATERwheel

WATER celebrates its fifth anniversary by launching a modest publication. This signifies our effort to broaden our outreach beyond the Washington, D.C. area to all who wish to make use of our resources in theology, ethics and ritual from a feminist liberation perspective.

WATER's main goal is educational -- to invite readers to debate new ideas, consider fresh concepts, become acquainted with new resources-- in short, to be actively involved in the creation of new ways of being religious.

Another goal of WATER is to develop strategies in the service of social change. We believe that well informed feminists of faith can spark the courage and creativity of many people - men as well as women - to transform unjust social structures into a renewed created order. It is this vision of equality and mutuality which we hope to make real for ourselves and for our children.

We welcome readers to the "WATERwheel," so named to signify the input which gives this organization energy and the output which comes from its action. Your comments and suggestions are more than welcome. In fact, we need them to shape this publication into a vital source of information, discussion and inspiration.

Enjoy it. Use it. Pass it on. This keeps the WATERwheel turning.

WE are in the midst of AIDS. It is time for feminists to turn our attention to this crisis. For these reflections I try to imagine the day after the last AIDS case is cured as a point of reference. It will not be, finally, how we treat AIDS, but how we live with one another in the face of it and after that counts.

Excellent local efforts to work with people who have AIDS are being made by individuals and groups/agencies which are church connected. This is laudable, but the churches historically have been good at this kind of direct service. They have an endless supply of band aids and a willingness to use them especially if they have been a cause of the problem.

My purpose is to move beyond band aids and to look at the underlying issues which

I suggest the following way of looking at the moral issues at hand: First, I name the problem of AIDS both in its U.S. expression where it has struck gay men and intravenous drug users the hardest, as well as in a global context where the full impact is seen. Second, I name obvious areas which need attention as we develop an adequate ethical response to AIDS. And third, I conclude with some sense of what it means to have faith and to theologize long after the AIDS pandemic has peaked.

AIDS - Gay and Global

"AN Invitation to Rethink Sexuality: A Christian Feminist Liberation Perspective" is a paper I wrote for an international consultation on AIDS held in Toronto, October 1987 (available from WATER).

Issues that feminists have been dealing with over the last twenty years - racism, economic discrimination, oppression of women, disregard for children - all play themselves out in the AIDS pandemic.

cause and might cure some of the moral problems surrounding AIDS. Strong, clear, participatory moral discourse is called for. As we face AIDS the move to a cooperative/comunal way of doing ethics has begun, if for no other reason than because the usual moral authorities have retreated in fear and silence. Many are afraid to speak a word of love and affection, terrified to try justice and compassion for a change. Or, when they do, they speak with so many rejoinders, disclaimers, and caveats that the message is lost.

able from WATER). It outlines Christian sexual ethics in terms of vulnerability, pleasure, accountability and generativity. Such an analysis is a start, but frankly, I find even my own early work to be woefully inadequate to deal with the enormity of AIDS.

At the Toronto meeting, sponsored by the World Council of Churches as well as the Canadian and U.S. National Councils of Churches, I was struck by two complementary,

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Who's Who at WATER

Diann Neu, co-founder and co-director, is a liturgist with an M.Div. and S.T.M. Diann's skill at organizing and facilitating groups was evident recently at the "Women Church: Claiming Our Power" conference in Cincinnati which she coordinated. Diann is currently honing her skills at fund raising and desk top publishing so that WATER can continue to grow.

Mary E. Hunt, co-founder and co-director, is a theologian with a Ph.D. and M.Div. Mary was recently Visiting Assistant Professor of Religion at Colgate University. She is currently turning her considerable energies to writing nearly fulltime. She is rarely without her lap top computer.

Tish Jaccard keeps the office in shape. Her able handling of orders, requests for information and mailings is crucial for WATER's smooth functioning. Her mother helps with mailings at home.

Carol Scinto is on board on Wednesdays. She keeps the Resource Center up to date. Her proofreading skills are indispensable, and we expect that her prose will grace these pages.

Jessica Weissman is our computer consultant whose phone number (now a state secret lest others bother her) adorns our computers. Can't figure out something? Call Jessica. Without her we would be scratching with sticks in the sand.

Terry Donohue provides bookkeeping skills and occasional legal advice. Her frequent trips from New Jersey are always cause for celebration.

Susan Phillips, a senior at Colgate University, was WATER's first January intern. She helped prepare a manuscript of the writings of Anne McGrew Bennett and provided much needed youthful energy in the office.

Volunteers make WATER flow... Call if you can help.

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Editors: Mary E. Hunt, Diann Neu

Designer: Diann Neu

Editorial Assistant: Carol Scinto

Circulation Manager: Tish Jaccard

Design Consultants: Melissa Cooper
and Carol Zimmerman

WATER is an educational center, an alliance 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 on programs, projects, publications, workshops, retreats, conferences and liturgical planning which have helped thousands of people to be part of an inclusive church.

WATERwheel is published quarterly by Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual. It is free to WATER donors. Please send news items, inquiries and comments to:

Editors

WATERwheel

8035 13th Street

Silver Spring, MD 20910 USA

301) 589-2509, 589-3150

WATER Staff Receives 1988 Hecker Award

The 1988 Isaac Hecker Award for Social Justice given by the Paulist Center in Boston was bestowed on Diann Neu and Mary E. Hunt for their work on justice for women in church and society. The annual award is given to "an outstanding American Catholic who has been a leader in the Church's effort to bring about a more just world". Previous awardees include Dorothy Day, the United Farm Workers and Carol Coston.

Many WATER friends and supporters attended the evening liturgy and lecture "Let Justice Role Down Like Water" which WATER staff presented, as well as the mass where the award was given. Marsie Silvestro, singer and song writer, paid special tribute by singing her popular "Blessing Song," and Credo Dance Company performed. The award reads:

*To Mary E. Hunt and Diann Neu
Co-founders and Co-directors of
WATER, the Women's Alliance for Theology,
Ethics and Ritual
for you are:*



Mary E. Hunt and Diann Neu, WATER Co-directors, celebrate with friends at the Hecker Award.

*Live Spirits of Women-Church
Live Wires and agile critics
Prophets, priests and sisters
Companions in Celebration and Struggle
Women Crossing Worlds.*

WATER thanks the Paulist Center Community for their generosity. Financial support connected with the award will enable WATER to continue its work for justice for all.

Programs Model Feminist Education

WATER's Lenten Season programs, held at Trinity College in conjunction with their campus ministry office, reflect our commitment to quality celebration as well as stimulating education.

Friends in other parts of the country often lament the fact that they cannot join us. Hence we will try to recap enough of the flavor to give even the most far flung friends a way of "being there." We hope that program updates will encourage local groups to use their resources to hold similar events. Call us at WATER for help in planning, creating, evaluating your events.

Ash Wednesday is traditionally a time for reflection. Our theme was "...teach me wisdom in my secret heart." Psalm 51:6. The group (over 65 women and men gathered here) took time to listen to scripture and pray a litany of wisdom calling on our foresisters Deborah, Judith, Esther, Ruth and Miriam:

O Great Wisdom, Sophia, through the wisdom of these women, grant us wisdom to:

- Listen to the stories of our people.
- Listen to the fears in the streets.
- Listen to the cries of the homeless.
- Listen to the aches of the oppressed.
- Listen to the secrets of our own hearts.

Ashes were blessed, distributed and washed off. This unusual ending symbolizes our need to work together to gather our wisdom in groups which make social change. Reminded of our mortality, we left strengthened in our resolve to trust our Sophia, our wisdom.

International Women's Day, March 8, gave WATER friends time to focus "Women-Church Looks Ahead and Around." Diann Neu, conference coordinator for Women-Church: Claiming Our Power" captured its spirit in story and slides.

Mary Hunt outlined the basic history and reason for being of women church. She suggested that *ecclesia* was never meant to include women and slaves in the first place, so it is no wonder that institutional churches have been slow to incorporate women on women's own terms. Ironically, it is only by substantive changes, signalled by the term "women-church," that women and other marginalized

people can be church and churches can be a "discipleship of equals". Women-church groups meeting in Argentina, Switzerland and elsewhere make clear the scope of the movement.

Small groups discussed their experiences of and visions for women-church in the next five years. Among the issues which these groups would like to see addressed are:

- inclusion of women from racial/ethnic groups other than white
- the place of Jesus in women-church
- incorporation of men and education of children in women-church
- the relationship between women-church and patriarchal religions
- concrete social justice stances and activities of women-church as women-church

These and many other creative suggestions will be featured in future WATER educational programs.

Holy Thursday and Passover was the occasion for the premier of "Miriam's Sisters Rejoice", a new feminist seder. One hundred twenty-five enthusiastic celebrants, including some very energetic children, prayed, sang and ate their way through the ritual meal.

The four questions which help us to know "why this night is different than any other night" were asked and answered by mother/daughter couples who were present. This unique family touch gave the seder a flavorful feel.

Traditional seder food adorned each specially decorated table. Many participants played percussion instruments just as Miriam, after all, took her timbrel and danced. Eventually the whole group danced in a giant spiral.

The seder was written by Diann Neu, Mindy Shapiro, Barbara A. Cullom and Tobie Hoffman. The *haggadah*, or script, is available from *WATERworks Press*. We suggest that groups around the country use it next year as a way to bring Christians and Jews into closer relationship.

Forthcoming local programs will be announced in these pages soon. When you are in the Washington D.C. area be sure to call and find out what is planned. We would love to welcome you to a WATER event in Washington.

International Feminists Study at WATER

A group of 15 Belgian and Dutch religious feminists visited WATER as well as other feminist theological centers in the United States this spring. The group was made up of women from a variety of professional and religious backgrounds including students and professors of feminist theology, social workers, and pastoral ministers.

Seven of the women came to WATER where they participated in three days of seminar and on-site learning about feminist issues in religion. WATER co-directors Mary E. Hunt and Diann Neu presented workshops on feminist theology, liturgy and the women-church movement.

Under WATER's auspices they visited local groups involved in social change from a feminist perspective. These organizations included NETWORK, New Ways Ministry, Catholics for a Free Choice, the Quixote Center, Women's Ordination Conference and the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

In future pages of this newsletter we hope to publish their reflections on their U.S. visit. WATER looks forward to strengthening our international links through more visits to and from international friends. WATER is working through the Women-Church Convergence to coordinate plans for global feminist theological sharing.



Survey Reveals Data About Women- Church Base Communities

WATER is asked often about women-church liturgical base communities around the country and throughout the world. We want to know how many there are, where they are, and how many people participate in them.

We are collecting data on these groups. We have already received survey responses from over 100 groups. Some responses have come from women who want to know of a group that they can connect with in their area.

Interested? Have a group? Send for the survey. Send a group's name and ask us to send them the survey. Write to WATER/WC Survey, 8035 13th Street, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

Moral Sense...

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not competing realities: people with AIDS and the global reach of the problem. These continue to shape my thinking.

The people with AIDS who attended the consultation were the most poignant testimony. One man, who had been in seminary with me in California, left the room periodically to pop AZT. His ministry is profound but precarious.

Another earnest but obviously fun-loving fellow asked a prominent physician if he should tell medical personnel that he has AIDS if he were injured in an accident and lost blood. The physician said no because he could not guarantee the quality of care that the young man would receive.

Another man talked about becoming old all of a sudden- having to face death, his own and those of his friends, in their thirties instead of their seventies. He spoke of being robbed of his most productive years. And he made clear that God, the church and other previously meaningful categories and persons were superfluous to his struggle to live with dignity.

The major issue, I realized, is not re-thinking sexuality, though as I will say shortly, that is important. Rather, there are new ques-

I am equally offended when I see well intentioned references to the suffering of Job, as if we are to die and watch one another die because somehow suffering will redeem us. Such suffering redeems no one, in my judgment, because behind such a statement is the implicit notion that people get AIDS as a punishment for being what society still thinks they ought not to be. We do not need the patience of Job; we need the boldness of Hagar and the courage of Harvey Milk to face AIDS. If we need Jesus at all, and frankly I wonder as I see some Christian churches shirk responsibility in the face of AIDS, we need his righteous anger to drive pharmaceutical companies from the temples and get on with the medical research that will consign AIDS to the history books.

Most people with AIDS who attend such conferences are well educated white men. They are important, but they are not the whole picture. They have provided the leadership in the movement to eradicate AIDS, but AIDS challenges us to take care of our own, and to extend our web of caring as far as we can. By doing so, we show churches what it means to be a community, indeed what it means to be church.

The second eye opener at this meeting was Dr. Cecilia DeSweemer, a Belgian physician who works on public health issues in

Sharing the earth's goods with the earth's people with a preferential option for the poor is a Christian moral mandate.

tions. What kind of society do we live in when medical personnel, Hippocratic oath notwithstanding, would refuse treatment to persons with AIDS? What kind of future do we project for our children when AIDS is taking the youth from the gay male community, both literally by claiming thousands of lives (over 65% of those persons with AIDS are gay or bi-sexual) and by forcing the gay male community not to grow up but to grow old? Life expectancy for many gay men now rivals that of isolated tribes.

AIDS is the medicalization of homophobia, as many have stated. It is license to kill by neglect, withholding needed funding for medical research, and by deliberate, sinister ignoring of the suffering. I do not consider this sort of suffering to be a normal, acceptable part of the human condition. When I hear liberals write AIDS off as the mystery of why "bad things happen to good people" I hear beneath their words a kind of contempt which masks their sense that AIDS is a "good thing" happening to "bad people."

Africa. She is a no-nonsense kind of person, one you would imagine at her desk long into the night, unable to say no to patients who need her, doing the extra bit of research which might just provide a clue.

This tough physician wept openly on stage as she told a moving story of her work with African women. As a white European it took her quite some time to gain their trust. Finally they invited her to dance with them. She accepted the invitation, and for hours on end she danced with woman after woman, each one handing Cecilia her baby to hold while she danced. Finally, she danced with the oldest woman in the tribe. They danced and danced until they dropped from exhaustion into each other's arms. Then she said the women trusted her. She could work with them. She was their sister.

Her story, that of a doctor who works with women and children with AIDS, gave me my second clue about AIDS. In fact, AIDS mirrors the racist, sexist, heterosexist and clas-

sist nature of our time, and it is not going away. Studies show that the fastest growing population with AIDS is women with dependent children, especially women who use intravenous drugs or have sex with partners who do. Babies with AIDS do not need the patience of Job. They need the best medical care money can buy, and compassion and support for their parents.

In the U.S., of the roughly 36,000 cases reported through May 1987, (now there are over 60,000 reported cases), roughly 2500 were women. About half of them contracted AIDS through intravenous drug use, several through blood products for coagulant disor-

special attention in an ethical approach which operates out of a model of plenty rather than a model of scarcity. There is plenty to be done.

Ethical Issues At Play

WHILE AIDS itself is new, the usual constellation of money, sex and power determines the ethical issues involved.

The primary factor in the AIDS equation, in my judgement, is economic. It cuts two ways. First, the poor, especially women, children and i.v. drug users, are disproportionately affected by the disease due to environmental factors linked with poverty, eg. poor nutrition,

This is a holy vocation - to take and to use the power that rightly belongs to the whole community.

ders, 250 through transfusion and over 700 through sex with infected men. Women with AIDS tend to be between 20 and 49; over half are Black, 27% White, 20% Hispanic. AIDS was the leading killer of women 25-29 in New York City in 1985.

The point is not to diminish in any way the suffering of gay men. Rather it is to underscore that the same issues that feminists have been dealing with over the last twenty years-- racism, economic discrimination, oppression of women, disregard for children-- all play themselves out in the AIDS pandemic.

"High risk behavior" in Dr. DeSweemer's setting means simply being alive for many women and children. Lack of protein and malnutrition, high incidence of diarrhea and tuberculosis, no money for condoms, little local health education, no funding for simple testing of blood products, little emphasis on women and children's health all contribute to a climate where AIDS is flourishing. However it is transmitted, the point is that the problem will not be solved simply by safer sex pamphlets. In West and Central Africa AIDS will only be solved by health education and money from first world governments. Our response to AIDS must include their needs.

A feminist view of AIDS reveals that we have a both/and situation at hand. We have both gay men, who are unquestionably the most profoundly affected in this country and who have done a wonderful job of stemming the tide through use of condoms and safer sex programs, and we have the poor, many of whom are women and dependent children, and intravenous drug users. The primary AIDS populations are people cast aside and considered expendable long before AIDS, and destined to be junked long after AIDS. They deserve our

stressful working conditions, etc. If they don't start out poor, most people with AIDS certainly die poor with treatment and personal maintenance beyond the means of most.

Second, the politics of medical research has played a major role in keeping AIDS on the margins of the health care agenda. Expenditures reflect priorities. Research and development for the Department of Defense makes AIDS funding look like Girl Scout cookie money. As long as irrational fears like homophobia and callous disregard for economically poor persons persist, more to the point, as long as our sex, race and money-stratified system prevails, there will be insufficient money for AIDS research.

It is not the task of religious people to fight over condoms, as some Catholic bishops have done, but to state over and over until people are tired of hearing it that sharing the earth's goods with the earth's people with a preferential option for the poor is a Christian moral mandate.

Sex is another part of the AIDS scene. AIDS has pushed sex back into national consciousness, promising to wipe out gains made by both the women's movement and the lesbian/gay movements. The task of the religious community, especially at a time when sex is getting a bum rap, is to reclaim the goodness and beauty, the communication and pleasure that come with sex. Just because AIDS is sexually transmitted does not make sex wrong, evil or dirty. To the contrary, responsible, safe sex practices are part of our birthright.

Children need to hear an enthusiastic "yes" to consensual sex with partners of either gender, not the current "Just say No" to anything that does not conform to the marriage

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WATERworks Press Broadens Outreach

WATERworks Press is the publishing arm of WATER. The name comes from the fact that waterworks are a "system of reservoirs, channels, mains and pumping and purifying equipment by which a water supply is obtained and distributed."

Our hope is that materials published by WATERworks Press will broaden our outreach as an educational center and hasten the day when justice will reign.

Recent Publications

"Theological Pornography: The End of An Era" by Mary E. Hunt
Video tape, VHS, 90 min. with study guide for group discussion
\$30

"Gifts of Women-Church" by Mary E. Hunt with Meditation by Diann Neu
Audio Cassette, 75 min.
\$6.95

"Miriam's Sisters Rejoice: A Seder for Holy Thursday and Passover" by Diann Neu, Mindy Shapiro, Barbara Cullom, Tobie Hoffman
Complete 34 page script includes music and recipes.
1-2 copies, \$5 each; 3-9 copies, \$4.50 each; 10+ copies, \$3.50

Forthcoming Publications

Women-Church Series

Women Crossing Worlds Directory
Watch these pages for further details.

To Order:

Enclose name, address, phone number and money. Make payment to WATERworks Press, 8035 13th Street, Silver Spring, MD 20910

WATER Needs Your Help

WATER's Fifth Anniversary year encourages us to keep growing. We developed a wish list of items we need to expand our services and make people more comfortable. If you can help, please call Diann Neu at 301) 589-2509 or write her at WATER.

Laser Printer
Xerox machine
Carousel slide projector
VCR
2 line phone
Light table
Electric stapler
Volunteers!

Moral Sense...

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norm. They need to be taught how to talk freely about things like condoms which simply were not part of our public vocabulary a few years ago. They need to be told how to prevent the spread of AIDS, not how to prevent the pleasures of responsible sex.

If money and sex drive the ethical discussion on AIDS, then power is the fuel. I despair of any adequate response from the religious communities until there are some fundamental power shifts. This is painfully obvious when some church people, who allegedly represent the will of the divine, tell people with AIDS to accept their suffering, or that to be housed in church-related hospices they cannot have their lovers visit, or that children with AIDS are not welcome in their Sunday schools.

This is an abuse of power not unlike that which prevails at social service agencies when people discuss the isolation of persons living with AIDS, and in medical centers where so-called professionals choose not to render services.

We are coming to understand what it means to deal with power, especially those of us who have had to get over our elitist tendencies to keep power at arm's length for fear of being tainted by its allegedly corrupt nature. Now we know that we must empower ourselves and one another in order to survive. This is a holy vocation - to take and to use the power that rightly belongs to the whole community.

ers to do the same. It will be a proud community, one which looks back with a sense of accomplishment for having led the way out of the moral and medical morass of AIDS. It will be a community which has helped people live with dignity, not simply die with dignity, making every effort to transform society so that life after AIDS will be different.

2. People today put aside homophobia and racism, sexism and greed to see and respect love wherever it is, learning from the poorest of the poor that in the grip of AIDS there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female. It will be a diverse community, one which honors difference and invites diversity, but one which finally takes care of its own.

3. The God/ess of such a community will reflect the best that the community has to offer and a little more. That divine presence will prompt celebration of another triumph of the human community over disease, more so, the triumph of the human community over its own worst instincts.

4. Theologians will realize that our task is to do justice, not to fetishize footnotes. Ours is the work of clarifying and enabling the whole community to reflect on its experience and to claim its power in shaping a just society. Otherwise we have no excuse for writing when we should be lobbying, protesting and providing direct service.

If there is any reason to spend time on things spiritual in the face of an urgent pandemic, it is because in the Christian tradition there is a history of turning the power equation around...

If there is any reason to spend time on things spiritual in the face of an urgent pandemic, it is because in the Christian tradition there is a history of turning the power equation around, to "put down the mighty from their thrones" and to "exalt those of low degree," to "fill the hungry with good things" (Luke 1:52-53), and "to perform the mercy promised to our parents" (Luke 1:72). We are a people who have spoken truth to power on more than one occasion. Let this be another one.

Faith and Theology After AIDS

I look to the day when AIDS will be a medical dinosaur. If there will be faith and theology after AIDS it will be because:

1. People in today's faith communities put their resources where the need is, and pressure oth-

Still we slog on with and through AIDS to a deeper understanding of our responsibilities. Simply by doing so, in prayer and protest, in direct service and research, in outrage and in awe, we are becoming a community of faith that will one day look back on AIDS as a dinosaur. Until then, let us roll up our sleeves. There is work to be done.

Feminist Liberation Theologian Mary E. Hunt, Ph.D., is co-director of WATER.

Prayer Of Directions

(Face North. Cross your arms in front of your chest and sway from side to side.)

Oh Great Spirit of the North, we come to you and ask for the strength and the power to bear what is cold and harsh in life. We come like the buffalo ready to receive the winds that truly can be overwhelming at times. Whatever is cold and uncertain in our life, we ask you to give us the strength to bear it. Do not let the winter blow us away. Oh Spirit of Life and Spirit of the North, we ask you for strength and for warmth.

(Take a deep breath, drop your arms to your side, face East, raise your arms above your head.)

Oh Great Spirit of the East, we turn to you where the sun comes up, from where the power of light and refreshment come. Everything that is born comes up in this direction - the birth of the babies, the birth of the puppies, the birth of ideas and the birth of friendship. Let there be the light. Oh Spirit of the East, let the color of fresh rising in our life be glory to you.

(Take a deep breath, drop your arms to your side, face South, put your arms around one another and sway.)

Oh Great Spirit of the South, spirit of all that is warm and gentle and refreshing, we ask you to give us this spirit of growth, of fertility, of gentleness. Caress us with a cool breeze when the days are hot. Give us seeds that the flowers, trees and fruits of the earth may grow. Give us the warmth of good friendships. Oh Spirit of the South, send the warmth and the growth of your blessings.

(Take a deep breath, drop your arms to your side, face West, extend your arms outward palms up in a gesture of receiving.)

Oh Great Spirit of the West, where the sun goes down each day to come up the next, we turn to you in praise of sunsets and in thanksgiving for changes. You are the great colored sunset of the red which illuminates us. You are the powerful cycle which pulls us to transformation. We ask for the blessings of the sunset. Keep us open to life's changes. Oh Spirit of the West, when it is time for us to go into the

earth, do not desert us, but receive us in the arms of our loved ones.

(Take a deep breath, breath yourself up, face up, raise your whole body up, stretch your head up, raise your arms.)

Oh Great Spirit of all that is Above, of everything that soars, of all that flies, of all high visions, all that is above the earth, we honor you and glorify you for the power that you are. Lift our minds and our hearts above the earth so that they may never be afraid of great heights and of looking like the eagle high across the land. Oh Spirit of all that is Above, put us on the wings of spirit travel so that we may know this world.

(Take a deep breath, breath your arms to your side, face down, bend over from the waist.)

Oh Great Spirit of all that is Below, of all that pulls us to deeper places, to the depths of ourselves, we turn to you in the memory of all that goes down. We ask you to give us the strength and the courage to face death. When people leave us in this life to share life with you, let there not be a grief that is untrue. When we experience losses and changes in our lives, let us see them as your revelation. Oh Spirit of all that is Below, purify us.

(Take a deep breath, breath your body to center, face center, extend your hands, palms outward to rest in the palms of the persons on either side of you.)

Oh Great Spirit of everything that is Center, of everything that is free, we come to you with gratitude. We thank you and bless you for being with us, for calling us to be centered within ourselves. Remind us that it is only from this center that we reach out to others. Breathe through us that your work of justice may be done. Oh Great Spirit of everything of the heart and everything that is mystery, send us forth to walk a way of beauty and holiness. Open our hearts to friendship. Oh Spirit of everything that is Center, never let us forget that you are the center of hope.

(Drop your hands and embrace each one in peace.)



Background

The Prayer of the Directions has roots in the Native American tradition. It blesses creation and can be prayed as the Prayer of the Four, Five, Six, or Seven Directions. The Prayer of the Four Direction refers to North, South, East and West. The fifth direction is center. The Prayer of Six Directions uses North, South, East, West, Above and Below.

The Prayer of the Seven Directions follows. The proper place for this prayer is outside, but it can be done inside, preferably in a space with windows. Face the North to begin. As you pray turn in a circle to face the direction of your prayer.

I have included gestures for each prayer. When using this prayer, invite a different person to lead each part. It is very powerful when you give people the ideas that follow and invite them to create their own prayer.

Note: Apply these directions to your own country. The seasons and other specifics (i.e. animals, plants, climate) for the directions may vary.

from *Liturgies of Solidarity* (forthcoming) by Diann Neu, Feminist Liberation Liturgist and co-director of WATER.

Resources

All of the following are available for donors to borrow from the WATER Resource Center or they can be purchased at your favorite feminist bookstore.

Bunch, Charlotte *Passionate Politics*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987.

An excellent collection of essays which chronicles the history of the women's movement from 1968-1986 from the perspective of one of its most perceptive leaders and theorists.

Collins, Mary *Women at Prayer*, New York: Paulist Press, 1987.

The 1987 Madeleva Lecture in Spirituality focuses on Annie Dillard, Anne Sexton and Meinrad Craighead as "exemplars of contemporary women at prayer."

Cooley, Paula M., Farmer, Sharon A. and Ross, Mary Ellen, editors, *Embodied Love*, New York: Harper and Row, 1987.

A new contribution to feminist theory and ethics from scholars in religion like Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, Rosemary Radford Ruether and Sheila Davaney.

Daly, Mary *Websters' First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1987.

An imaginative source book for naming women's reality on its own terms; Daly at her wise and witty best.

Downing, Christine *Psyche's Sisters*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988.

Sisterhood is explored both in its biological and mythological dimensions; complicated dynamics become clear.

Eck, Diana L. and Jain, Devaki *Speaking of Faith*, Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1987.

The best collection of essays on cross cultural, interreligious feminist thought currently available.

Heins, Marjorie *Cutting the Mustard*, Boston: Faber and Faber, 1987.

An informative, absorbing and challenging account of the firing of Nancy Richardson from Boston University School of Theology with attention to the implications for affirmative action.

Isasi-Diaz, Ada and Tarango, Yolanda *Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988.

Hispanic Women's Liberation Theology is expressed in experience-based analysis; a new resource using an innovative method.

Kirk, Martha Ann *Celebrations of Biblical Women's Stories*, Kansas City, MO: Sheed and Ward, 1987.

Illustrated prayer services for many occasions, including the music of Colleen Fulmer and the author's creative dance.

Randour, Mary Lou *Women's Psyche, Women's Spirit*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1987.

Randour's perceptive interviews of 94 women provide insights on women's spirituality which complement feminist theology.

Starhawk *Truth or Dare*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987.

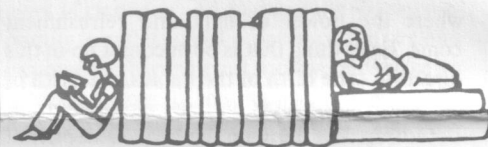
A look at power, all of it, with myths, rituals, stories and symbols of the Goddess to transform ourselves and the world.

Teish, Luisah *Jambalaya: The Natural Woman's Book of Personal Charms and Practical Rituals*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985.

A fascinating collection of stories, celebrations and rituals based on the African religion of the Mother.

von Wartenberg-Potter, Barbel *We Will Not Hang Our Harps on Willows*, Minneapolis: Meyer, Stone and Company, 1988.

A poignant effort to share women's wisdom and spirituality throughout the world.



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