Editorial

Religion is endlessly interesting because it seems to be as much a barometer as a thermometer of culture. It reflects the subtle changes that can precipitate new ways of looking at things just as surely as it measures the ups and downs of daily life. Feminist approaches to religion work this way, or so we are always learning at WATER.

A forthcoming study of clergy women in many mainline mostly white Christian denominations shows an enduring 9% salary gap with men, inadequate criteria for measuring women's job performance as women, and a trend away from the parish-based ministry of old. All this in a culture which is increasingly pluralistic and well for women who are preparing for diverse ministry challenges, badly for those who cling to traditional expectations.

The World Council of Churches is gearing up for its next General Assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe, next year, with lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered issues widely viewed as the locus for ideological differences and cultural diversity. WCC might take a page from the Religious Consultation on Population, Reproductive Health and Ethics' exciting project, "Good Sex: Women's Religious Wisdom on Sexuality," in which scholars from a range of religious traditions are exploring what women have to say. It is a good bet that foregrounding such wisdom in the debates would result in a new approach for everyone.

Re-imagining colleagues are firing up a revival for their next gathering. Ex-communicated Catholic theologian Tissa Balasuriya seems to have drawn fire for asking whether Christianity Vatican-style can be exported to the new religious "market" that is Asia. Islamic women are pushing the envelope when it comes to both interpretation of the Koran and traditional practices.

All of these colleagues know something about the price of integrity, a price we at WATER strive to make more affordable for all.

Of An Index

by Mory E. Hunt

Publishing an index every five years is more than a convenience for readers, though, hopefully, it is that as well. It presents an opportunity for us at WATER to reflect on the work we do, assess our strengths and weaknesses, and make plans to improve our offerings.

We do so this time with deep gratitude to Susan O'Brien, one-time WATER intern now Acquisitions Librarian at the New York Society Library in New York City. Her technical skill in compiling this handy guide and her generous donation of same to WATER is a signal gift. Likewise, our Managing Crone Carol Scinto deserves kudos for keeping us on deadline.

Five years ago in this space I rehearsed the history of this publication. At first WATER managed without a regular publication. Then we started WATERwheel in 1988 as a way to convey a bit of what we're thinking and doing, what comes our way, where we believe the wind in feminist faith-based social change ought to blow.

We are faced every three months not with blank screens but an abundance of material from which we cull our contents. We decide on lead articles and liturgy themes based on the urgencies of the moment and the issues we think need attention. From your responses - requests to reprint and comments that come our way - it seems we have touched nerves. Beauty and Beijing, children and cyberspace, pluralism and prayer are just some of my topics. Diann Neu has developed liturgies for first menstruation and menopause, for naming and chronic, for doing justice and celebrating the sabbath, among others. Some readers will accuse us of advanced eclecticism. We like to think of it as variety spicing life. Your suggestions are always welcome.

The Resource Center grows apace with literally thousands of titles coming our way for review. We select carefully the ones that make it into our Resources section, ever attentive to the changing needs of our readers who trust our judgment. We hope to have the whole collection computerized in the near future, thereby adding another dimension to our offerings.

A review of programs and projects in these five years reveals that we are increasingly global in our scope. Latin American exchange has gone on from the beginning, and it continues. But this Index makes clear that Europe, Australia and New Zealand also are places where we work with kindred colleagues. Our challenge ahead is to learn from Africa and the East, to break through the hegemonic Christian-shaped, English-speaking barrier to a more global approach. Again, your help is needed.

E-mail has emerged in these five years as a friendly rival of sorts to WATERwheel. We love it for its speed and scope; we are wary of it for its elusiveness and elitism. More people have physical mailboxes than electronic ones still. We don't cover anything in depth on e-mail so this publication is still our prime vehicle. Nonetheless, our Index in 2002 will probably have to include topics treated netwise. Let us know your thinking on technology.

All this leads to the obvious. Your readership is literally what makes this newsletter. We need your continued financial support, indeed donations over and above subscription costs so we can do the scale of outreach necessary to find people who want to be a part of the Alliance. We also need your feedback, your responses to articles and reports, your reactions to liturgies as well as your adaptations of them in your own settings. We need your sense of what kinds of books you want us to review. We also need your suggestions of places where we can distribute this publication so it will find its way into the hands of people with like concerns.

As we move toward the celebration of fifteen years of WATER's presence on the feminist religious scene, we do so with gratitude and with hope. It is with gratitude to you and all who make WATER work. It is with hope that when the twentieth anniversary Index is published it will reflect an ever more diverse and committed Alliance, including you.

Mary E. Hunt, PhD, is co-founder and co-director of WATER.
Another Five Years of WATERwheel: An Index
Vols. 6-10, Nos. 1-4, 1993-1997

Compiled by Susan O'Brien

This Index covers WATERwheel from Vol.6, No.1 (Spring 1993) to this issue, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Winter 1997). All volumes have four issues. Headings and subheadings are in bold type with modifiers or scope notes where necessary. See references guide you from a term not used as a heading to one which is used. See also references suggest related headings where additional material of interest may be found.

Because of the pervasiveness of Justice, Patriarchy and Lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered issues and aspects of Feminist Spirituality in WATER's work, as well as the omnipresence of Co-founders and Co-directors Hunt & Neu - these subjects and individuals have not been included as subject headings. However, as each Newsletter is centered around a Lead Article by Mary E. Hunt and a Liturgy by Diann L. Neu, a list of Lead Articles and Liturgies has been included in the index.

A

Abortion See Reproductive rights
Abuse See Clergy sexual abuse

Aging
Change of life: journey through menopause.
Vol.9, No.4 p.4-5
Choosing wisdom: a croning ceremony.
Vol.6, No.3 p.4-5

AIDS See also HIV
AIDS, AIDS and more AIDS. Vol.7, No.1 p.3
The urgency of being religious. Vol.7, No.4 p.1-2

Altar girls
On Altar girls. Vol.7, No.1 p.3

American Academy of Religion
News and notes. Vol.9, No.4 p.6

Anna Paulsen Haus (Gelnhausen)
WATER in Europe. Vol.8, No.2 p.6

Apartheid
Editorial. Vol.7, No.1 p.1

Argentina
Bravo Brasil, viva el cono sur. Vol.7, No.3 p.6
WATER staff in Latin America. Vol. 9, No.2 p.6

Australia
On reflection: WATER. Vol.7, No.2 p.8
Oz and En Zed: WATER's new mates. Vol.6, No.1 p.3

B

Baptism See Naming

Beijing '95
Beijing: before, if and after. Vol.8, No.2 p.1-3
Editorial. Vol.8, No.1 p.1
The world through women's eyes: a liturgy of song and empowerment. Vol.8, No.2 p.4-5

Bennett, John
A good man. Vol.8, No.2 p.3

Birth control See Reproductive rights

Blackmun, Harry (Supreme Court)
Just stop it. Vol.8, No.1 p.2
Boarder babies See Chi Child Care Center

Body image
Beauty and the body. Vol.9, No.1 p.1-2
Praise our bodies. Vol.9, No.1 p.4-5
To your health. Vol.9, No.4 p.1-3

Books and bookstores
How books appear here. Vol.10, No.2 p.6

Bosnia/Herzegovena
Oz and En Zed: WATER's new mates. Vol.6, No.1 p.3
Thursday strategy. Vol.6, No.1 p.6

Brazil
Bravo Brasil, viva el cono sur. Vol.7, No.3 p.6
Brazilian women's movements and feminist theologies. Vol.10, No.3 p.3
WATER work. Vol.10, No.2 p.6

Butler, Sandra
Cancer in two voices. Vol.6, No.2 p.6

Cancer
After Audre Lorde. Vol.6, No.1 p.1-2
Cancer in two voices. Vol.6, No.2 p.6
Capital punishment See Death penalty

Capitalism
Whither the common good? Vol.9, No.3 p.1-3

Carmody, John Tully
What's prayer got to do with it? Vol.10, No.1 p.2

Casa Sofia
Oz and En Zed: WATER's new mates. Vol.6, No.1 p.3

Catholics for a Free Choice
Beijing: before, if and after. Vol.8, No.2 p.2
North-South dialogue. Vol.6, No.1 p.3

Catholicas por el Derecho a Decidir
WATER staff in Latin America. Vol.9, No.2 p.6

Center for Media and Values
Week's right with this picture? Vol.6, No.3 p.2

Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence
Begone religious violence. Vol.6, No.2 p.6

Centro de Estudios Cristianos
WATER staff in Latin America. Vol.9, No.2 p.6

Chi Child Care Center
All our children. Vol.8, No.4 p.1-2

Children
All our children. Vol.8, No.4 p.1-2
Editorial. Vol.10, No.1 p.1
A grandmother's perspective. Vol.8, No.4 p.3
Home bodies. Vol.10, No.1 p.6
A new mother's view. Vol. 8, No.4 p.3
A Scandinavian feminist's thoughts. Vol. 8, No.4 p.3
A welcoming and naming ceremony for a child. Vol.8, No.4 p.4-5

Chile See also Shared Garden
Bravo Brasil, viva el cono sur. Vol.7, No.3 p.6
WATER staff in Latin America. Vol.9, No.2 p.6

China See Beijing '95

Clark, Margot Fletcher
Editorial. Vol.9, No.4 p.1

Clergy sexual abuse
On altar girls. Vol.7, No.1 p.3
What's right with this picture? Vol.6, No.3 p.1-2

Christian Lesbians Out Together
Re-imagining: I wish you had been there. Vol.6, No.4 p.2

Coming out
Coming out - coming home. Vol.7, No.3 p.4-5

Common Good (the)
Whither the common good? Vol.9, No.3 p.1-3

Communication See also Information Access; Internet; Media
Announcing: WATER on-line. Vol.7, No.1 p.6
Cyber heaven? Vol.9, No.2 p.1-2
E-mail evolution. Vol.6, No.4 p.6
E-mail made easy. Vol.7, No.4 p.6
E-notes on the WATERfront. Vol.8, No.1 p.6

Community & community building
Editorial. Vol.7, No.3 p.1
Let justice roll down like water. Vol.7, No.1 p.4-5
Whither the common good? Vol.9, No.3 p.1-3

Computers See also Communication; Internet; Media
Cyber heaven? Vol.9, No.2 p.1-3

2 WATERwheel Vol. 10, No. 4, 1997
Conferences
Called to Make Justice
Begone, religious violence. Vol.6, No.2 p.6
Discipleship of Equals
International Lesbian & Gay Association
News and notes. Vol.8, No.3 p.8
Kirkridge
The church on the hill. Vol.6, No.4 p.3
Lesbian Politics - Just a Lifestyle?
Bad Boll: more than just a pretty name. Vol.8, No.1 p.3
Living Under the Southern Cross
Oz and En Zed: WATER’s new mates. Vol.6, No.1 p.1
Non-Governmental Organizations Forum
Beijing: before, if and after. Vol.8, No.2 p.1-3
Editorial. Vol.8, No.1 p.1
Re-imaging
Beijing: before, if and after. Vol.8, No.2 p.2
Editorial. Vol.6, No.4 p.1
Re-imaging: I wish you had been there. Vol.6, No.4 p.1-3
United Nations World Conference on Women
Beijing: before, if and after. Vol.8, No.2 p.1-3
Editorial. Vol.8, No.1 p.1
Women-Church: Weavers of Change
Editorial. Vol.6, No.1 p.1
Weaving change with a new loom. Vol.6, No.2 p.1-2
Con-spirando See also Shared Garden
Bravo Brasil, viva el cono sur. Vol.7, No.3 p.6
Fall frenzy. Vol.7, No.4 p.6
A Shared Garden. Vol.9, No.2 p.6
A Shared Garden in Washington, DC. Vol.9, No.4 p.3
WATER staff in Latin America. Vol.9, No.2 p.6
Crone
Choosing wisdom: a croning ceremony. Vol.6, No.3 p.4-5
Cyberspace
Cyber heaven? Vol.9, No.2 p.1-3

D

Daly, Mary
Summer action in house. Vol.7, No.3 p.8
D'Arienzo, Camille
Just stop it. Vol.8, No.1 p.2
Daughter/mother relationship
We are all daughters. Vol.6, No.1 p.4-5
Death penalty
Just stop it. Vol.8, No.1 p.1-2
DIGNITY

Disabilities
Beauty and the body. Vol.9, No.1 p.2
Discrimination See also Racism; Sexism Lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered Sexual integrity. Vol.7, No.3 p.1-3
Diversity and inclusivity See also Shared Garden
The church on the hill. Vol.6, No.4 p.3
A gathering of communities. Vol.10, No.2 p.4-5
Re-imaging: I wish you had been there. Vol.6, No.4 p.1-3
Sexual integrity. Vol.7, No.3 p.1-3
Shared Garden rituals. Vol.10, No.3 p.4-5
Weaving change with a new loom. Vol.6, No.2 p.1-2

“Don’t ask, don’t tell” Sexual integrity. Vol.7, No.3 p.3

Dossey, Larry
What’s prayer got to do with it? Vol.10, No.1 p.2

E

Earth Day
Think green: hope for planet earth. Vol.8, No.1 p.4-5
Eating disorders
Beauty and the body. Vol.9, No.1 p.1-2

Eck, Diana
Ecofeminism
Bravo Brasil, viva el cono sur. Vol.7, No.3 p.6
Enter: Ivone Gebbara. Vol.6, No.3 p.3
Think green: hope for planet earth. Vol.8, No.1 p.4-5
Ecumenism See Diversity; Pluralism
Eiesland, Nancy L.
Beauty and the body. Vol.9, No.1 p.3
Ekkllesia of Women
Feminist ministry. Vol.8, No.3 p.1

Elections
Brazil
Bravo Brasil, viva el cono sur. Vol.7, No.3 p.6
U.S.
Editorial. Vol.7, No.4 p.1
Editorial. Vol.9, No.1 p.1
Editorial. Vol.9, No.3 p.1
Whither the common good? Vol.9, No.3 p.2

E-mail See also Communication
E-mail evolution. Vol.6, No.4 p.6
E-mail made easy. Vol.7, No.4 p.6
E-notes on the WATERfront. Vol.8, No.1 p.6
Empowerment See Power

F

Feminist Liberation Theologians, Network of
Feminist theologians to meet at AAR/SBL. Vol.10, No.2 p.8

Global Network of feminist theologians and ministers. Vol.9, No.1 p.3
Network of Feminist Liberation Theologians. Vol.9, No.4 p.6
Projects in progress. Vol.9, No.3 p.8

Feminist theology See also Women in ministry
Global network of feminist theologians and ministers. Vol.9, No.1 p.3

Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schussler
Feminist ministry. Vol.8, No.3 p.1
In honor of her. Vol.7, No.4 p.3

Fundraising See also Mother’s Fund
Creative giving. Vol.9, No.3 p.6
Generous donors. Vol.8, No.4 p.6
Help! with funding. Vol.9, No.2 p.3
One in a million. Vol.8, No.2 p.6
Saving ways. Vol.9, No.1 p.6
Seed money. Vol.9, No.4 p.6

G

Gebbara, Ivone See also Shared Garden
Brazilian women’s movements and feminist theologies. Vol.10, No.3 p.3
Enter: Ivone Gebbara. Vol.6, No.3 p.3
Ivone Gebbara update. Vol.9, No.1 p.6
Women crossing worlds. Vol.7, No.2 p.3

Germany
Bad Boll: more than just a pretty name. Vol.8, No.1 p.3
Shared blessings. Vol.8, No.3 p.3
WATER in Europe. Vol.8, No.2 p.6

Girl’s Spirituality Group
Editorial. Vol.10, No.1 p.1
Girl talk. Vol.10, No.1 p.6
News and notes. Vol.9, No.4 p.6
Projects in process. Vol.9, No.3 p.8

Grela, Cristina
Women crossing worlds. Vol.7, No.2 p.3

H

Harkness, Georgia
Feminist pilgrimage. Vol.9, No.1 p.3

Health care See also Reproductive rights
Beauty and the body. Vol.9, No.1 p.2
Editorial. Vol.8, No.3 p.1
To your health. Vol.9, No.4 p.1-3

HIV
AIDS, AIDS and more AIDS. Vol.7, No.1 p.3
To your health. Vol.9, No.4 p.2
The urgency of being religious. Vol.7, No.4 p.1-2

I

Inclusivity See Diversity

Information access See also Communication;
Internet; Media
Cyber heaven? Vol.9, No.2 p.1-3
What’s right with this picture? Vol.6, No.3 p.1-2
In Memory of Her See also Mother’s Fund
Ann Chavez Vol.7, No.3
Anne Ditto Vol.6, No.1
Arlene Flaherty Vol.10, No.2
Carol Zinn Vol.8, No.4
Charles Mellor Vol.9, No.4
Connie Murray Vol.8, No.1
Diann Neu Vol.7, No.2
Dorothy Jaccard Vol.6, No.3
Edda Pedano-Barton Vol.9, No.4
Elizabeth Hunt Duffy Vol.9, No.4
Ericsson Ficklin Vol.6, No.4
Frank and Mary Neu Vol.9, No.4
Geraldine Komiarek Vol.6, No.3
Gerrie Muller Vol.8, No.4
Gertrude and Alvin Morgenstein Vol.9, No.3
Harry J. Kelly Vol.8, No.2
Jeanne Sproat Vol.8, No.4
John A. Neu Vol.9, No.4
John Boswell Vol.8, No.1
John C. Bennett Vol.8, No.2
John Connolly Vol.6, No.4
Karen Reiniger Vol.8, No.2
Kevin Calegari Vol.8, No.1
Kitty Bennett Vol.7, No.4
Madeleine Barot Vol.8, No.4
Margaret Crow Vol.6, No.2
Margaret Habig Vol.7, No.2
Margaret McCallum Vol.8, No.1
Margot Finlay Clark Vol.9, No.4
Maria Carmela Gentilescu Vol.10, No.2
Marisol Grace Parker Crawford Vol.6, No.4
Mary Bolger Jones Vol.6, No.1
Mary Elizabeth Malican Butchart Vol.8, No.2
Mary Ellen Tosi Vol.8, No.1
Mimi Marechal Vol.8, No.2
Nancy Taylor Vol.8, No.2
Nita Barrow Vol.8, No.4
Quentin Angus Vol.9, No.4
Rita Moffett Vol.6, No.2
Ruth McDonough Fitzpatrick Vol.8, No.4
Ruth Seid Vol.8, No.2
Sally Coston Vol.8, No.1
Sarah Elizabeth Carlson Vol.6, No.2
Shawn Sheffield Vol.7, No.3
Sherri Dau Vol.9, No.3
Sheila McNeill Vol.9, No.4
Shirley Holz Vol.7, No.3
Sue Oswald Vol.8, No.4
Suellen Saunders Vol.8, No.2
Teresa Hunt Mangan Vol.9, No.4
International Day Against Violence Against Women
Break the silence. Vol.9, No.3 p.4
International Women’s Day
The world through women’s eyes. Vol.8, No.2 p.4-5
Internet See also Communication; E-mail
Cyber heaven? Vol.9, No.2 p.1-3
News and notes. Vol.10, No.1 p.8
Technology update. Vol.9, No.4 p.8

Interns at WATER (experiences of)
Around the office (Tisa Anders). Vol.6, No.1 p.6
Beginner’s vow (Eri DeLorier). Vol.9, No.2 p.3
Cooking with WATER (Monique Mariko Maier) Vol.8, No.3 p.6
Grace notes (Ure Harle). Vol.7, No.1 p.8
Internal report (Hetti Irner). Vol.7, No.3 p.6
Internally speaking (Cynthia Lapp). Vol.8, No.2 p.8
Richard’s Almanac (Richard Russell). Vol.9, No.3 p.6
Staff rounds (Kelly Cregan). Vol.6, No.3 p.3
Who came out of the WATER (Helena Johansson). Vol.6, No.2 p.3

Internships at WATER
Editorial. Vol.10, No.1 p.1
News and notes. Vol.10, No.1 p.8

Irish Institute for Feminist Theology
Editorial. Vol.7, No.4 p.1

J

Journalism See Media

K

Killian, Gloria
Sisters inside. Vol.10, No.1 p.6

Kyrarchy See also Fiorezza, Elisabeth Schussler
Whither the common good? Vol.9, No.3 p.1-3

L

Language/naming
Brazilian women’s movements and feminist theologies. Vol.10, No.3 p.3
How a garden grows. Vol.10, No.3 p.1-3
North-South dialogue. Vol.6, No.1 p.3

Latin American Biblical Seminary
One in a million. Vol.8, No.2 p.6

Lead Articles by Mary E. Hunt
After Audre Lorde. Vol.6, No.1
All our children. Vol.8, No.4
Beauty and the body. Vol.9, No.1
Beijing: before, if and after. Vol.8, No.2
Cyber heaven? Vol.9, No.2
Feminist ministry. Vol.8, No.3
How a garden grows. Vol.10, No.3
Just stop it. Vol.8, No.1
Longing for belonging. Vol.7, No.1
Of the index. Vol. 10, No. 4
Pluralism, oh pluralism. Vol.10, No.2
Re-imagining: I wish you had been there. Vol.6, No.4
Reimagining Reimagining. Vol.7, No.2
Sexual integrity. Vol.7, No.3
The urgency of being religious. Vol.7, No.4
To your health. Vol.9, No.4
Weaving change with a new loom. Vol.6, No.2
What’s prayer got to do with it? Vol.10, No.1
What’s right with this picture? Vol.6, No.3
Whither the common good? Vol.9, No.3

LEAP (Life Experiences Activities Program)
News and notes. Vol.9, No.4 p.6
WATER honored for outstanding service. Vol.7, No.4 p.8

Liberation Theology
Enter: Ivone Gebara. Vol.6, No.3 p.3
Longing for belonging. Vol.7, No.1 p.1

Liturgies by Diann L. Neu
Break the silence. Vol.9, No.3
Celebrating women’s power. Vol.6, No.4
Change of life: journey through menopause. Vol.9, No.4
Choosing wisdom: a cronign ceremony. Vol.6, No.3
Come pray with us. Vol.10, No.1
Coming out: coming home. Vol.7, No.3
From developing girl to changing woman: a celebration of menses. Vol.6, No.2
A gathering of communities. Vol.10, No.2
Let justice roll down like water... Vol.7, No.1
Liberating love for justice. Vol.7, No.4
Our work: weaving women together. Vol.7, No.2
Praise our bodies. Vol.9, No.1
Praised be feminist ministers. Vol.8, No.3
Sabbath: a celebration of time. Vol.9, No.2
Shared Garden liturgies. Vol.10, No.3
The world through women’s eyes: a liturgy of song and empowerment. Vol.8, No.2
Think green: hope for planet earth. Vol.8, No.1
We are all daughters: healing the daughter/mother relationship. Vol.6, No.1
We are a wheel. Vol.10, No.4
A welcoming and naming ceremony for a child. Vol.8, No.4

Lorde, Audre
After Audre Lorde. Vol.6, No.1 p.1

Loretto Women’s Network Mary Rhodes Award
Rhodes Award to WATER. Vol.6, No.3 p.8

Love
Liberating love for justice. Vol.7, No.4 p.4-5
The urgency of being religious. Vol.7, No.4 p.1-2

Mary Rhodes Award
Rhodes Award to WATER. Vol.6, No.3 p.8

Media
Beauty and the body. Vol.9, No.1 p.1-2
Editorial. Vol.7, No.2 p.1
What’s right with this picture? Vol.6, No.3 p.1-2

Menopause
Change of life: journey through menopause. Vol.9, No.4 p.4-5

Menstruation
From developing girl to changing woman: a celebration of menses. Vol.6, No.2 p.4-5

4 WATERwheel Vol. 10, No. 4, 1997
“The earth, the air, the fire, the water” (Anon) Vol.7, No.3 p.4; Vol.8, No.1 p.4
“Everything is a human being” (Walker) Vol.8, No.1 p.5
“Feed our hungry souls” (Fulmer) Vol.8, No.3 p.4
“Good for the world” (Near adapt. Neu) Vol.7, No.3 p.4
“A hard death” (Sarton) Vol.6, No.1 p.5
“I am enough” (Fulmer) Vol.9, No.1 p.5
“I found god in myself” (Shange) Vol.9, No.1 p.5
“In your presence” (Fulmer) Vol.8, No.4 p.5; Vol.9, No.2 p.4; Vol.10, No.1 p.4
“Invisible for too long” (Neu) Vol.7, No.3 p.4
Let the women be there” (Silvestro) Vol.6, No.2 p.5
“Light a candle” (Zelda) Vol.9, No.2 p.4
“Little girl child” (Benjamin) Vol.8, No.4 p.4
“Lullaby” (Williamson) Vol.6, No.1 p.5
“Marvelous menstruation moments” (Shange) Vol.6, No.2 p.4
“May you walk” (Silvestro) Vol.9, No.4 p.4
“Mother” (Anon) Vol.6, No.1 p.4
“O, freedom” Vol.6, No.3 p.5
“On putting the sabbath loaf into the oven” (Umansky) Vol.9, No.2 p.5
“The power moves” (Breatley)Vol.9, No.4 p.5
“Prayer to friends” (McDade) Vol.10, No.1. p.4
“River is flowing” (Trad.) Vol.9, No.3 p.5
“River of birds” (Libana) Vol.8, No.2 p.5
“The Sabbath” (Anker) Vol.9, No.2 p.5
“Scheinah” (Bell) Vol.9, No.2 p.5
“Singing for our lives” (Near) Vol.9, No.3 p.4
“Song of community” (McDade)Vol.7, No.1 p.5
“Song of the self: the grandmother” (Villanueva) Vol.6, No.4 p.4
“Standing before us” (Ettler) Vol.7, No.2 p.4
“Strands of common thread” (Humphries) Vol.7, No.2 p.5
“Take this” (Silvestro) Vol.8, No.3 p.4
“Voices” (Near) Vol.6, No.4 p.5
“Walk through these doors” (Silvestro) Vol.6, No.3 p.4; Vol.7, No.1 p.4
“Water women” (Bozarth-Campbell) Vol.7, No.1 p.5
“Welcome home” (McDade) Vol.7, No.3 p.5
“We are a wheel” (Hildegard of Bingen Vol.10, No.2 p.4
“We are daughters of the earth” (Trad.) Vol.10, No.3 p.4
“We bring who we are” (Fulmer) Vol.9, No.1 p.4
“We walk this earth together” (Danean) Vol.8, No.1 p.4
“Wings unfurled” (Fulmer) Vol.8, No.3 p.4
“Wisdom’s circle (Spiritual adapt.)” Vol.6, No.3 p.4
“Woman I am” (Trad.) Vol.9, No.4 p.4
“Woman river flowing on” (Ettler) Vol.6, No.1 p.4
“Womanchild” (Ettler) Vol.8, No.4 p.4
“Women come” (Trad) Vol.9, No.4 p.4; Vol.10, No.2 p.4
Stonewall Riot - 25th anniversary

Take Our Daughters to Work Day
Take our daughters to work - yes! Vol.8, No.1 p.6
Technology See Communication; E-mail; Internet

Sabbath: a celebration of time. Vol.9, No.2 p.4-5

De Tilletenberg
WATER in Europe. Vol.8, No.2 p.6

United Nations See Conferences

La Urdimbre de Aquehua
Bravo Brasil, viva el cono sur. Vol.7, No.3 p.6
WATER staff in Latin America. Vol.9, No.2 p.6

Uruguay
WATER staff in Latin America. Vol.9, No.2 p.6

Violence
Begone religious violence. Vol.6, No.2 p.6
Break the silence. Vol.9, No.3 p.4-5
Editorial. Vol.7, No.2 p.1
Editorial. Vol.7, No.3 p.1
Sisters inside. Vol.10, No.1. p.6

Visiting Scholars/Associates at WATER (experiences of)
Grace notes (Mary J. Shanahan) Vol.7, No.1 p.8
On reflection: WATER (Coralie Ling, Anne Hall, Anna Mae Mayer) Vol.7, No.2 p.8
A Scandinavian feminist’s thoughts (Solveig Boasdottir) Vol.8, No.4 p.3
Scholarly promise (Solveig Boasdottir) Vol.9, No.2 p.3
Shared blessings (Herta Leistner) Vol.8, No.3 p.3

WV

WATER and sister organizations
Editorial. Vol.6, No.3 p.1
WATER in the news
Tapping into WATER resources. Vol.7, No.4 p.3

W
What's right with this picture? Vol.6, No.3 p.1-2

**WATER staff - comings, goings & stayings**
1996 Fall programs at WATER. Vol.9, No.3 p.6
1996 Spring programs at WATER. Vol.9, No.1 p.8

Around the office. Vol.6, No.1 p.6
At WATER. Vol.10, No.2 p.2
Bravo Brasil, viva el cono sur. Vol.7, No.3 p.6
Comings and goings. Vol.6, No.2 p.3
Fall frenzy. Vol.7, No.4 p.6
Grace notes. Vol.7, No.1 p.8
News and notes. Vol.8, No.1 p.8
News and notes. Vol.8, No.3 p.8
News and notes. Vol.8, No.4 p.8
News and notes. Vol.9, No.4 p.6
News and notes. Vol.10, No.1 p.8
Office notes. Vol.6, No.4 p.6
Projects in progress. Vol.9, No.3 p.8
Rhodes award to WATER. Vol.6, No.3 p.8
Shared blessings. Vol.8, No.3 p.3
A Shared Garden. Vol.9, No.2 p.6
A Shared Garden. Vol.9, No.4 p.3
Staff rounds. Vol.6, No.3 p.3
Summer action in house. Vol.7, No.3 p.8
Summer scene. Vol.9, No.2 p.8
Ubiquitous co-directors. Vol.8, No.4 p.6
WATER gatherings. Vol.8, No.3 p.6
WATER in Europe. Vol.8, No.2 p.6
WATER programs. Vol.7, No.1 p.6

WATER staff in Latin America. Vol.9, No.2 p.6
Water ways down under. Vol.7, No.3 p.3
WATER work. Vol.10, No.2 p.6
Where WATER staff work. Vol.6, No.4 p.6
Who's who at WATER. Vol.9, No.1 p.6

**Weaving**
Weaving change with a new loom. Vol.6, No.2 p.1-2

**Women-Church**
Birth, care and feeding of a Women-Church group. Vol.6, No.1 p.8
Feminist ministry. Vol.8, No.3 p.2
Weaving change with a new loom. Vol.6, No.2 p.1-2

**Women-Church Convergence**
Beijing: before, if and after. Vol.8, No.2 p.3
News and notes. Vol.8, No.1 p.8
Women-Church Convergence update. Vol.8, No.3 p.3

**Women Crossing Worlds**
Bravo Brasil, viva el cono sur. Vol.7, No.3 p.6
Enter: Ivone Gebara. Vol.6, No.3 p.3
North-South dialogue. Vol.6, No.1 p.3
Women crossing worlds - South to North. Vol.7, No.2 p.3

**Women in Ministry**
Bravo Brasil, viva el cono sur. Vol.7, No.3 p.6
Editorial. Vol.6, No.1 p.1
Editorial. Vol.6, No.3 p.1
Editorial. Vol.8, No.4 p.1

Enter: Ivone Gebara. Vol.6, No.3 p.3
Global network of feminist theologians and ministers. Vol.9, No.1 p.3
Praised be feminist ministers. Vol.8, No.3 p.4-5
Weaving change with a new loom. Vol.6, No.2 p.1-2

**Women's Health Initiative**
To your health. Vol.9, No.4 p.1-3

**Women's Ordination Conference**
Editorial. Vol.8, No.4 p.1
Fall frenzy. Vol.7, No.4 p.6
A new mother's view. Vol.8, No.4 p.3
News and notes. Vol.8, No.1 p.8
A Scandinavian feminist's thoughts. Vol.8, No.4 p.3

**Work**
Our work: weaving women together. Vol.7, No.2 p.4-5

**World Council of Churches**
Bad Boll: more than just a pretty name. Vol.8, No.1 p.3
Beijing: before, if and after. Vol.8, No.2 p.2
Oz and En Zed: WATER's new mates. Vol.6, No.1 p.3
Re-imagining: I wish you had been there. Vol.6, No.4 p.1-3
Thursday strategy. Vol.6, No.1 p.6

---

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vol. 6, 1</th>
<th>Vol. 7, 1</th>
<th>Vol. 8, 1</th>
<th>Vol. 9, 1</th>
<th>Vol. 10, 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6, 2</td>
<td>7, 2</td>
<td>8, 2</td>
<td>9, 2</td>
<td>10, 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6, 3</td>
<td>7, 3</td>
<td>8, 3</td>
<td>9, 3</td>
<td>10, 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>6, 4</td>
<td>7, 4</td>
<td>8, 4</td>
<td>9, 4</td>
<td>10, 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Give Us Your Feedback About WATERwheel**

What topics would you like to have addressed in the near future?

What liturgies and rituals would you like to see appear in WATERwheel?

How do you use the Resource Section?

What suggestions do you have on content, context, format, readability?

Where can we distribute WATERwheel?

Other comments ...

Thank you for your participation. Please send to WATER, 8035 13th Street, Silver Spring MD 20910-4803.

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WATERwheel Vol. 10, No. 4, 1997 7
We Are a Wheel
by Diann L. Neu

Preparation
Place this WATERwheel in front of you as a symbol of the five years it represents, and/or gather your back issues and open them to your favorite pieces. Invite others to join you.

Centering Prayer by Hildegard of Bingen
A wheel was shown to me, wonderful to behold... Divinity is in its omniscience and omnipotence like a wheel, a circle, a whole, that can neither be understood, nor divided, nor begun, nor ended.

Round: “We are a Wheel,” words of Hildegard of Bingen, round by Betty Wendelborn
We are a wheel, a circle of life. We are a wheel, a circle of power. We are a wheel, a circle of light. Circling the world this sacred hour.

Connecting with You
We dedicate this blessing to you. Imagine the many ways you connect to others who read WATERwheel. Take a few minutes to recall what you value about it: lead articles, liturgies, In Memory of Her memorials, stories about WATER, resources, news and notes... (Pause) Imagine yourself joined with other readers, doing works of justice.

Blessing
May you be blessed with faithfulness, long life and sharp memories.

Connecting Our Community
Let us offer this blessing in praise of our international community of WATERwheel readers. We live in 46 nations and 50 US states plus DC! Think of the ways you connect globally each time you read the ‘Wheel. (Pause)

Blessing
May our community be blessed with new life, diversity and healing powers.

Connecting Our Work
Let us enjoy this blessing remembering our common work. WATERwheel exists to make visible feminist theology, ethics and ritual. Pause and ponder how the ‘Wheel empowers you to make visible feminist issues. (Pause)

How can you connect friends, family, colleagues with WATER? Think of someone you can introduce to WATER today. (Pause) Share your WATERwheel, or give someone a subscription.

Blessing
May our work be blessed with creativity, re-sources and justice making.

Closing Prayer
Hildegard of Bingen 900 years ago said:
Now here is the image of the power of God;
This firmament is an all-encompassing circle.
No one can say where this wheel begins or ends.

Diann L. Neu, MDiv, STM, MSW, is co-founder and co-director of WATER.

Complimentary
To Share With A Friend