

# waterwheel

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

## Spiritually Just

By Mary E. Hunt

A marvelous Canadian women's conference, "Gathering Blossoms Under Fire," held May 26-28 in London, Ontario, invited me to ponder anew the connection between spirituality and social justice. More than 800 participants moved through "Seeding, Cultivating and Blossoming" in three days of plenary sessions, workshops and good chances to chat with one another. Speakers, workshop leaders and organizers alike brought their best energies to high-spirited discussion, music, drumming, dance, bodywork, analysis and enjoyment. I presented a workshop on "Feminist Values in Action." When I left, I realized I needed to rethink the relationship between spirituality and social justice in light of several new factors.

First, globalization, that much touted given of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, has created new forms of injustice while also creating mega-structures that make social change difficult. The original concept of "one world," a family of nations at peace amid plenty, has been woefully corrupted. If you don't speak English and use Microsoft Windows, if you don't have investments in the stock market and access to the Internet, you live at a serious disadvantage in

this new world disorder. As one woman put it recently at a WATER event, for people who are poor, globalization means "gobble-ization," as in, "my culture was gobbled up by yours." We who love our e-mail pass over this unintended consequence of our plenty at our peril.

At the meeting, Canadian political activist, author and policy critic Maude Barlow of the Council of Canadians, a public interest group that seeks genuine democratic development, highlighted the problem. She noted that transnational corporations operate outside most legal constraints. That is what the Seattle and Washington DC protests against the International Monetary Fund and World Bank were about.

She described how cultural and biological diversity are quickly becoming a thing of the past in favor of McDonald's and Coca-Cola all over the world. An entrenched underclass is now a permanent fixture in the global economy, while some CEO's make 3000 times what average workers earn. The three richest men in the world are worth more than the 48 poorest countries. According to Maude Barlow, the privatization of everything is the

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**Above:** Soup's on and ideas perking at WATER Suppers with Authors; clockwise from left: Amy Agnew, Mary Lou Randour, Miriam Bauerlin, and Blanca Barrera. **Below:** Sharing the Spirit at Pentecost Liturgy, l. to r., Liliana Santos-Caballero, Mimi Goodwin, Cecilia Alava, Corinne Scott, and Gwen Heard. See p. 3.



## Editorial

A new millennium is supposed to be a fresh start. So why are we seeing so much backsliding when it comes to women and religion? It must be because of how effective we are.

The Southern Baptist Convention is leading the backslide with its Neanderthal notion that while women can preach they cannot pastor a church, this according to a scriptural interpretation that remains obscure. With many women already ordained and

serving effectively as pastors, such a proposal begs rational explanation. Trying to put the toothpaste back in the tube just doesn't make sense.

These Baptists are rivaled only by the Roman Catholic Church's remarkable treatment of Sister Jeannine Gramick and Father Robert Nugent, founders of New Ways Ministry. Authorities silenced them a year ago because of their effective work with lesbian/gay/bisexual and transgendered people.

But in a bizarre, seemingly desperate move, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger et al called them back to Rome to announce that they could not talk about what had happened to them, namely, that their consciences had been violated but don't tell anyone!

They also were instructed that they should cease and desist in encouraging letter writing to the Vatican about such injustices. For those who wish to express their opinions about this ban and

the issues of freedom of conscience, not to mention common sense, it negates, write to: Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Piazza del S. Uffizio 11, 00193 Rome, Italy.

Yes, it is a new millennium according to one reckoning of time. It is the same old same old for some people. But for those who seek justice, it is ever a new day with ever more work to do.



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Editors: Mary E. Hunt and Diann L. Neu

Designer: Diann L. Neu

Copy Editor: Carol Murdock Scinto

Circulation: Cynthia Lapp

Computer Consultant: Jessica Weissman

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WATER is a feminist educational center, a network of justice-seeking people that began in 1983 in response to the need for serious theological, ethical and liturgical development for and by women. We work locally, nationally and internationally doing programs and projects, publications and workshops, counseling and liturgical planning which help people to actualize feminist religious values and bring about social change.

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WATERwheel Editors

8035 13th Street • Silver Spring MD 20910-4803 USA

Phone 301-589-2509 • Fax 301-589-3150

E-mail: water@hers.com

Internet: www.hers.com/water

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*It is a divine well that never runs dry when we take only what we need, share all that we have, and return to it when our time on this earth is over.*

## Spiritually Just

(Continued from page 1)

hallmark of globalization. It is a sobering scene for those of us whose religious values call for equality and justice.

Second, spirituality, long a resource for values and commitments to counter such injustice, is subject to the same market forces in a globalized economy. While institutionalized forms of religion are having their problems, spirituality as such has plenty of cachet.

It seems that many people who have left or never cared for organized forms of religion now have a practice, work a program or follow a guru. Even those who continue to be affiliated with mainline traditions are finding helpful such spiritual practices as meditation and retreats. The search is perennial, the techniques timeless. But the tendency in our time is for such practices to become privatized or individualized. This, however inadvertently, feeds into instead of challenging the power structures of the rest of society.

Spirituality is one of the fastest growing market shares in the publishing world. On a spin through the National Cathedral's bookshop recently, I noted that the "Chicken Soup for the Soul" series had as big a display space as the Christian classics. Here at WATER it is hard to keep up with the outpouring of books on angels, gargoyles, goddesses and saints.

The commercialization of spirituality is not new. The Bible has long been a best seller and it is not God who profits from the royalties! But the new market forces make spiritual art and spiritual direction, labyrinths and crystals, tarot cards and massage oil, incense and goddess sculptures things that can be consumed right along with everything else.

I am not suggesting that new spiritual expressions are wrong. To the contrary, they can be very helpful. I meditate on occasion and recently bought a wonderful little pillow-sized labyrinth on a cloth that rolls up like a tortilla for handy carrying after you trace the labyrinth with your non-dominant hand, eyes closed. Rather, I am simply noting that

coincident with the rise of spirituality is a consumer mentality that can turn even our best efforts into commodities for sale to the highest bidders.

The risk lies in confusing the forest for the trees, mistaking objects and practices that aid spiritual deepening with spiritualities that are deep because they permeate the roots of human longing for connection and stimulate the human impulse toward unity. In my experience, such practices and the beliefs on which they are based spring from a thoroughly communal, justice-focused source. It is a divine well that never runs dry when we take only what we need, share all that we have, and return to it when our time on this earth is over. That is what I mean by the connection between spirituality and social justice.

The connection has been severed in our time by a variety of means. Some organized religions have done it by becoming authoritarian corporations whose ways of operating betray the common good. Not a few religious leaders have cut the cord when they dupe their followers, profit from the spiritual longings of others and/or take advantage, especially sexual advantage, of their congregants. There are religious groups that have made such a fetish of spirituality that they have developed practices that distract from "worldly concerns" in favor of "higher things." Just what might that look like as long as we are all breathing the same air?

Putting it back together, connecting us with the deepest sources of our being, is no easy matter in an economy that sizzles with options. But making spirituality and social justice one is what many feminists in religion have been struggling to accomplish for decades. I put it at the top of my agenda lest the globalized injustice that keeps some from having drinking water reflect the dry well of a spirit gone awry.

*Mary E. Hunt, Ph.D., feminist theologian and ethicist, is co-founder and co-director of WATER.*

# Reading, Riting and More

The new "Supper with Authors" series drew raves both for the quality of the various delicious soups and for the insights shared around the table. We recommend it as a functional format. We started at the end of the workday (5:30 p.m.) with a simple supper of homemade soup (recipes on request!), bread, fruit and tea. We ended by 7:30, still early enough to get home at a decent hour but allowing time for substantive discussion. Contact your local authors, or choose an illuminating book to discuss over a meal.

Biblical scholar **Sharon Ringe** led off our series with her discussion of **Wisdom's Friends: Community and Christology in the Fourth Gospel** (Westminster John Knox, 1999). It was empowering to think afresh about the text, using Sharon's focus on friends.

**Carroll Saussy**, Professor Emerita of Pastoral Counseling at Wesley Theological Seminary, brought her approach to **The Art of Growing Old: A Guide to Faithful Aging** (Augsburg Press, 1998). Participants explored their own aging processes as well as their responses to older friends.

Psychologist **Mary Lou Randour** explored **Animal Grace: Entering A Spiritual Relationship with Our Fellow Creatures** (New World Library, 2000). She invited WATER colleagues to consider animals as equals who have much to teach us, a challenging idea.

**Kelly Brown Douglas**, Professor of Theology at Howard University Divinity School, contributed her work on **Sexuality and the Black Church: A Womanist Perspective** (Orbis Books, 1999). Her focus on the construction of sexuality and the difference it makes offered useful insights that WATER folks hope to share, especially with youth.

**Mary E. Hunt** concluded the series with an overview of the volume she edited (with Patricia Beattie Jung and Radhika Balakrishnan), **Good Sex: Feminist Perspectives from the World's Religions** (Rutgers University Press, 2001). This collaborative project with scholar activists opens new doors for public policy.

A wonderful Pentecost celebration, "Feasting at Sophia's Table," gathered dozens of people from around the Washington area (and Carolyn Farrell, BVM, from the Gannon Center in Chicago). **Diann Neu**, **Cindy Lapp** and **Mimi Goodwin** provided leadership for a festive event, held outside in a big circle under the trees. Mary Hunt proposed that Pentecost provides a possible antidote to the contemporary phenomenon of globalization, suggesting that the story is about how to hold together many languages, many perspectives, indeed many approaches to truth. Beautiful music and deep prayer provided much needed sustenance as we engaged in the solidarity called for by the feast.



## In Memory of ...

Attentive friends comfort us in loss, honor those we hold dear, give expression to what is most meaningful in our lives and loves. WATER friends have been especially attentive in contributing to the In Memory Fund on learning of the recent unexpected death of Mary E. Hunt's father.

*From the WATER staff; the Women-Church Convergence; Frank and Mary Neu, Indianapolis, IN; Rose Mary Meyer, Chicago, IL; Kathy Shorter and Cathy Nietch, Hyattsville, MD; Lois Pearson, Glenville, NY; Karen Schwarz, Foster City, CA:*

In memory of **Francis C. Hunt**, loving father and dedicated spouse, a cradle Catholic who became understandably disillusioned with the kyriarchal Church. He gave his daughter, **Mary Elizabeth**, support for her work for ecclesial and civil change. As Mary says, "We had more than one discussion of how things ought to be, and I credit him with some of my early sense of justice." May he rest in peace.

*From Elizabeth Thoman, Los Angeles, CA:*

In memory of **Bernardine Pieper**, CHM, 1919 – 2000. Visionary leader of religious life following Vatican II, she was friend, guide and feminist role model not only for Iowa's Humility Sisters but for justice-seekers throughout the Midwest – and beyond.

*From Monica Maher, New York, NY:*

In honor of the son born to former WATER intern **Monique Miyake-Maier** and **Gavin Moses** in Cambridge, MA. **Tree Moses** was delivered April 8, 2000.

*From Mary Grace Crowley-Koch, Mt. Prospect, IL:*

In memory of my dad, "**Bud**" **Crowley**, who died December 21, 1999.



## Around the Tea Table

*Time for tea when Aruna Gnanadason comes to call, and Carol Scinto's all ears.*

You never know whom you'll meet at the WATER office. United Church of Christ seminary intern **Mimi Goodwin** from Sitka, Alaska, unexpectedly ran into UCC women's issues leader **Lois M. Powell** from Cleveland, Ohio. Loey is a longtime WATER supporter who is our link with UCC women.

**Aruna Gnanadason** from the World Council of Churches spent an afternoon with us while she was in Washington for a meeting with church executives. She made WATER a priority stop in her capacity as the WCC's leader on

women's issues as part of a larger justice portfolio. We were delighted to compare notes and realize once more how similar are the dynamics of oppression and liberation for women around the world.

Thanks to **Peggy Wyss** from the St. Luke's House Back-to-Work Program, who successfully completed her internship at WATER. On to the job market!

Feel free to visit the WATER office when you are in the area. Who knows what wonders you'll encounter?



*This liturgy, abbreviated from the original, was celebrated in the Archdiocese of Northern Virginia after Bishop Loverde canceled Mary Hunt, Mary Lou Sleevi and Diann Neu as speakers at Dominican Retreat in McLean, VA. Thanks to Call to Action of Northern Virginia for sponsoring this liturgy and lecture series.*

### Preparation

Place a table in the center of a circle of chairs and on it put a cloth, three candles, a pitcher of water and a water bowl.

### Call to Gather

Spirituality is about paying attention, looking more carefully, breathing deeply, uniting with Wisdom Sophia, starting anew and attending again. It involves self, relationships and community. It is concerned about justice, the earth and right relations.

We gather tonight to learn from the spiritual wisdom of valiant women. We gather to praise valiant women for keeping the spirit alive even during hard times, for calling the church to action and renewal, especially in this diocese, and for being church so that our spirits may be nourished. Let us take a moment of quiet to prepare for this time together.

**Prayer:** "The Dancing Flame" by Mary Lou Sleevi, from **Sisters and Prophets**, Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame IN, 1993. Used with permission of the publisher.

(Mary Lou brought her painting, the Dancing Flame, to be with us.)

*Adapted from Luke 12:49; Hebrews 12:29.*  
From the beginning,  
Light plays in the dark.  
Sparks fly. Morning stars.  
The Spirit choreographs a Leap.  
God, shod in Fire, touches down  
on the dance floor of Earth...  
...loving to do the old soft-shoe-  
a tap dance without taps.  
Keeping time to the pounding  
of each human heart-Upbeat, downbeat, offbeat.  
She is imaging the Dancer in a whole new way.  
Hold her hand. *There is light!*

### Candle Lighting

**Chant:** "Come, Sophia Spirit, Come," Nigerian, from **Bring the Feast: Songs from the Re-Imagining Community**, Pilgrim Press, 1998.

Come, Sophia Spirit, come.  
Come, all loving Spirit, come.  
Come, come, come.

(Three people each light a candle and pray:)

**First Candlelighter** (after lighting candle):  
Blessed are you, Dancing Flame, you guide us on the road toward freedom. **Chant:**

**Second Candlelighter** (after lighting candle):  
Blessed are you, Transforming Spirit, you enflame us with passion for justice. **Chant:**

**Third Candlelighter** (after lighting candle):  
Blessed are you, Ever-Present Wisdom, you sustain us with your inspiration. **Chant:**

Cup your hands in front of this light and gesture it toward your eyes and body three times

### Naming the Circle

Let us share our names, where we are from and why we are here. Then end with "I am a valiant woman" or "I support valiant women."

### Litany of Valiant Women

**Refrain:** "Spirit of Our Elders" by Kathy Sherman from **Coming Home**, c. 1993.  
Spirit of our elders, dance, oh dance in me. (2x)

Holy One, Wisdom-Sophia, Source of Life, we give thanks for the rich history of women from whose lives we now reap our own liberating hope. Their re-imaginings allow us to dream dreams with Pentecostal power. Let us name them.

We give thanks for our foremothers: Sarah, Hagar, Rebecca, Rachel, Leah, Billa, Zilpa, and the mothers of the twelve tribes, with whom Wisdom-Sophia first established her covenant.

We give thanks for our Biblical foresisters who kept faith alive: Miriam, Deborah, Esther, Ruth, Naomi, Judith, Mary, Elizabeth, Lydia.

We give thanks for our many feminist theologians who teach us to challenge hierarchal, patriarchal, kyriarchal teachings: Mary Daly, Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Dolores Williams, Judith Plaskow, Elsa Tamez, Mercy Oduyoye, Chung Hyun Kyung, Mary Hunt, Kwok Pui-Lan, Katie Canon, Pilar Aquino, Ivone Gebara, (name others):

**Refrain:** Spirit of our elders, dance...

We give thanks for our many feminist ministers, artists, musicians and liturgists, those among us who minister sacramentally without the bishop's hands having been laid upon us.

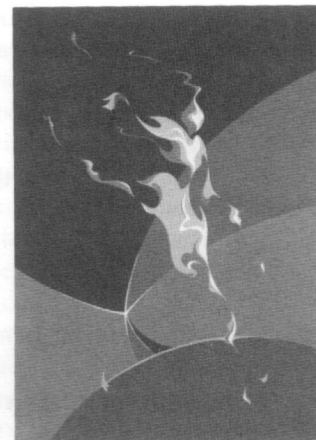
We give thanks for women who have caused ecclesiastical uproar: Joan of Arc, Teresa of Avila, Catherine of Siena, Hildegard of Bingen, Julian of Norwich, Sor Juana de la Cruz, foundresses of religious communities threatened with excommunication; Theresa Kane, Geraldine

Ferraro, Carmel McEnroy, Ludmilla Javarova, Catholic women who celebrate Eucharist.

We give thanks for our women's spirituality communities, women-church groups, Women-Church Convergence, Re-Imagining Community, WATER, The Grail, (name others):

Who are the valiant women of faith who have inspired you? Let us share their names in a loud, strong voice for the world to hear.

**Refrain:** Spirit of our elders, dance...



"The Dancing Flame" by Mary Lou Sleevi

### Words about Spirituality

Let us listen to words by faithful Catholic women about spirituality.

(Six women read in turn, with the third and sixth pouring water into the bowl after they read.)

**First Reader:** "Spirituality is... first of all, our way of relating to 'the holy', the divine, the sacred. Second, how we become 'whole', whole people, healed persons: sexually, psychologically, emotionally as well as spiritually, culturally and politically. Third, spirituality is no self-development trip isolated from the world we live in. Spirituality focuses on the self in all her relationships, in community and in society. A shorthand for the aims of spirituality would be: a transformed self in a transformed world."

—Mary Grey, "A Christian Feminist Spirituality of Apocalypse Now"

**Second Reader:** "Spirituality means making choices about the quality of life for oneself and for one's community."

—Mary E. Hunt, **Fierce Tenderness**

**Third Reader:** "Our current spiritual dilemma, then, lies in how to link the personal with the public dimensions of life; how to make private spirituality the stuff of public heaven in a world fiercely private and dangerously public at the same time. The fact is that simple spiritualities of creed and community and cooperation are no longer enough. We need now, surely, a spirituality of contemplative co-creation...Carrying on



God's work in the world is, in other words, 'the spiritual life.'"

—Joan Chittister, **WomanStrength**  
(Reader pours water into the bowl.)

**Song:** "Woman River Flowing" Carole Etzler  
Womanriver flowing on,  
Womenriver flowing on and on

**Fourth Reader:** "Christian spirituality means eating together, sharing together, drinking

# spirituality of valiant Women

n L. Neu

together, talking with each other, receiving each other, experiencing God's presence through each other, and, in doing so, proclaiming the gospel as God's alternative vision for everyone, especially for those who are poor, outcast, and battered... A feminist Christian spirituality calls us to gather together the ekklesia of women who, in the angry power of the Spirit, are sent forth to feed, heal, and liberate our own people who are women."

—Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, **In Memory of Her**

**Fifth Reader:** "Spirituality, the lived experience of the faith, is the place of crisis for women whose consciousness is raised as well as for the church as institution... What began for most women as a problem with the institution has become in recent years a problem of faith... In other words, because the issue has moved from the realm of politics to the realm of spirituality, the stakes are now very high."  
—Sandra M. Schneiders, "Feminist Spirituality: Christian Alternative or Alternative to Christianity?" in **Women's Spirituality** by Joann Wolski Conn

**Sixth Reader:** "The soul that is full of wisdom is saturated with the spray of a bubbling fountain - God herself."  
—Hildegard of Bingen  
(Reader pours water into the bowl.)

**Song:** "Womanriver Flowing On"

**Reading:** from the Gospel of Luke 1:46-55,  
transformed into "A Magnificat for Today" by  
Diann L. Neu

Our souls proclaim the greatness of God.  
We magnify Her Holy Name.  
Our spirits rejoice in Wisdom-Sophia,  
For She has looked with favor on us.  
The time has come for us to claim our heritage.  
For great things have been done through us  
And those who went before us.  
Holy is Her name and our name.  
This is the word of Sophia-Spirit.

## Reflection

In the readings we have heard valiant women speak about spirituality. These women model for us different spiritual paths. What comes to your mind when you hear the words "the spirituality of valiant women?" (Sharing)

## Blessing of Spiritual People

Who is a spiritual person? How do we recognize one? We close this reflection, blessing aspects of spiritual people, blessing ourselves. A spiritual person laughs and enjoys life.

**Response:** Let us laugh and enjoy life.  
A spiritual person resists domination. **R:** Let us..  
A spiritual person notices new life. **R:**  
A spiritual person enjoys a colorful sunset. **R:**  
A spiritual person pays attention. **R:**  
A spiritual person sees things as they are. **R:**  
A spiritual person calls the best out of people. **R:**  
A spiritual person lives deeply in touch with her own and the world's troubles. **R:**  
A spiritual person welcomes bold adventures. **R:**  
What else do we want to say about spiritual people? Tell us and we will respond. (Sharing)

## Water Ritual

In the center of our table is a bowl of water representing a sacred well. "Well dressing," a custom in Celtic spirituality, involved placing plants and flowers near a source of water as a way of honoring the precious gift of water from the Holy One. Let us give thanks to the Holy One for the gift of valiant women.

Blessed are you, Source of Life,  
for sharing life-giving water with your people.  
Blessed are you, Holy Spirit,  
for hovering over the water.  
Blessed are you, Wisdom-Sophia,  
for bringing rain to dry lands.  
Blessed are you, Miriam, for dancing your people through water to promised lands.

Blessed are you, Women Water Carriers, for carrying water from sacred wells to thirsty towns.

Blessed are you, Giant Tear, for weeping with us over the violence women experience from the churches, synagogues, mosques, ashrams, and religious places.

Blessed are you, Eternal Spring, for filling our jars with water and changing it into wine.  
Let us bless ourselves with this water as a symbol of receiving women's gifts.

## Blessing: Phil 1:3-9

I thank my God whenever I think of you; and every time I pray for all of you, I pray with joy, remembering how you have helped to spread the Good News from the day you first heard it right up to the present. I am quite certain that the One who began this good work in you will see that it is finished when the day of Christ Jesus comes.

## Sending Forth

Take the message of this day to the city streets and country roads of the world!

Let us go forth in all directions of the universe to bless and to embrace, to forgive and to heal, to welcome and to sanctify.

Let us go forth to the homeless and to the hospitable, to the hungry and to the full, to the thirsty and to the justice-seekers.

Let us go forth to the elderly and to those who seek wisdom, to the exiled and to those who understand freedom, to the hopeless and to those who are wise.

Let us go forth to church leaders who are blind to the needs of their people, to government officials who are deaf to the cries of the poor, to world leaders who are numb to the movements for peace.

Let us go forth to the women and the men of every race and place, to the young and to the old of every neighborhood, to the next generations and to their children of every nation.

Let us go forth in the name of the Holy One, the Goddess of love and liberation, the God of power and justice.

Let us go forth as valiant ones!

## Closing Song: "Come, Sophia Spirit, Come"

## Greeting of Peace

Let us greet one another with peace so that we may be strengthened for the struggles ahead.

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Diann L. Neu, MDiv, MSW, co-founder and co-director of WATER, is a feminist liturgist and licensed psychotherapist.

# Home and Away Thoughts

By Monika Barz

Imagine you are in Germany for the first time. How do you feel? Confused, lonely and homeless? Or relaxed, curious and well-attended? Last autumn I decided to visit the United States for the first time in my life. Not for one week, not for one month – no, for three months! My university gave me the opportunity of a sabbatical, a time off for research and, probably more important, occasion to open eyes, ears and heart to new experiences.

Where is WATER in this story? Thanks to Mary and Diann, I could rent a room in the house of WATER associate Barbara Cullom. I was provided all the essentials (bus timetables, maps, daily newspaper, calendar of feminist events). And I got two new families!

I lived in DC from the end of March till the end of May. During this time I participated in the Feminist EXPO 2000 in Baltimore MD, where I met a lot of women who became my friends and lent support to my research.

My next involvement was in the protest at the IMF and World Bank meeting in mid-April in DC, a major political event for which I took part in preparations and workshops the week before the demonstrations. It further helped me establish personal contacts to people and their political thoughts.

Barbara introduced me to volunteering in the Hospice of Northern Virginia. WATER included me in interesting programs. Sisters Against Sexism, a women-church group, invited me to celebrate their feminist liturgies. On Mother's Day I participated in the Million Moms March calling for stricter gun control measures in the U.S.

The support that WATER gave me to organize for myself an exciting stay in Washington DC was invaluable. And thanks to Cindy and Diann, I even had a great birthday party! Whenever a WATER woman needs help in Germany so she won't feel confused, lonely and homeless, don't hesitate to email me ([mbarz@swol.de](mailto:mbarz@swol.de)) for reciprocal networking.



## One in a Million

By Cynthia Lapp

I was one in a million, at least for a day. A million moms (or nearly a million, and all had mothers even if they themselves, technically speaking, weren't) gathered on the Mall in Washington to celebrate Mother's Day in the way it was originally intended. We called for social accountability, in this instance an end to gun violence, for "sensible" gun laws that protect our children.

We were a million and yet seemed like one: one voice demanding that the killing stop, that the guns be silenced. Indeed, my four-year-old daughter, Cecilia, thought she was the only voice singing along with Raffi as she let her "little light shine."

I'd almost forgotten what it felt like to be in a crowd that large. Since my children were born, I rarely have the time or energy to venture to the Mall for a good protest march. Now that I am a mother, it seems more important than ever to stand up and be counted for issues such as gun control, the environment, and inclusion of all in the faith community. But it was only because my small WATER village said it would also help mother my children that I could say yes this time. "Aunts" Mary Hunt and Diann Neu said they would keep track of my two in the crowd. Together we walked and listened, shouted and played as we found our place in the million.

Cecilia was fascinated by the speeches. Though she couldn't see the stage (or the 20-foot screens of the stage), she listened intently, asking questions about each speech, wanting definitions for everything. She understood that the people gathered didn't want guns. She

counts herself among those who do not want to hurt and kill. What she didn't understand was the NRA thinking that people ought to have guns. And when she randomly picked out an N, an R and an A on a sign nearby, she worriedly looked at me, wondering if that person wanted guns.

Two-year-old Jamie, my boy-child, had less appreciation for the speeches and more appetite for the popsicles and snacks. It is said that for boys, the single best predictor of delinquency and criminal behavior is witnessing domestic violence. Perhaps Jamie's father understood that the reverse might work, in having the foresight to send the camera along to the march. When he is older, Jamie will see and remember that, as a boy, he was part of a gathering of women calling for an end to violence. My hope, for both my children and all the children present that day, is that being part of this gathering will instill a commitment to peaceful solutions even for difficult problems.

The call was unmistakable on Mother's Day, 2000. If there is a power that Moms have, it is not only at home. We vote and we can make a difference. Just as choice is an issue to vote on, there is now another important concern to follow with our election dollars and ballots. We must save our children, for the village is all of us, aunts and children, mothers and fathers together.

*Cynthia Lapp, MTS, is staff at WATER, music director at her church and mother of two.*

Agosin, Marjorie. *THE ALPHABET IN MY HANDS: A WRITING LIFE*. Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999 (200 pages, \$24).

Words are power in these hands, words both in Spanish and English. Marjorie Agosin is a poet with a purpose, an exile and immigrant with insight.

Brock, Rita Nakashima and Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite. *CASTING STONES: PROSTITUTION AND LIBERATION IN ASIA AND THE UNITED STATES*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996 (373 pages, \$25).

The global sex industry is scrutinized from a feminist theological view. Rita Brock and Susan Thistlethwaite leave no stone unturned as they explore and explain why the worldwide exploitation of women is so difficult to stop.

Cardin, Nina Beth. *TEARS OF SORROW, SEEDS OF HOPE: A JEWISH SPIRITUAL COMPANION FOR INFERTILITY AND PREGNANCY LOSS*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1999 (172 pages, \$19.95).

A difficult problem handled with care by a rabbi who knows the power of ritual to handle grief. Insightful, sensitive words about deep loss.

Clare, Eli. *EXILE & PRIDE: DISABILITY, QUEERNESS, AND LIBERATION*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1999 (147 pages, \$14).

Strong words that follow strong analysis lead to good strategies for making the world safer for everyone. A new challenge to ableism.

Douglas, Kelly Brown. *SEXUALITY AND THE BLACK CHURCH: A WOMANIST PERSPECTIVE*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999 (162 pages, \$14).

Powerful, smart, clear, on target, this is a must read for all who work on sexual ethics. It is from and for the black church, but its implications are widespread and welcome.

Fisher, Judi and Janet Wood, eds. *COLOURS TRUE AND SPLENDID: THE DECADE OF THE CHURCHES IN SOLIDARITY WITH WOMEN*. Sydney South, NSW, Australia: Gospel and Gender, National Assembly, Uniting Church in Australia, 1999 (124 pages, \$12).

The World Council of Churches' Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women accomplished a great deal on the ground

where women found and worked with one another. That the churches in many instances squandered a chance to grow did not stop women in Australia for one minute.

Frankel, Ellen. *THE FIVE BOOKS OF MIRIAM: A WOMAN'S COMMENTARY ON THE TORAH*. New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998 (354 pages, \$16).

A creative approach that invites conversation as questions and answers are shared.

Hayes, Diana L., art by Charles S. Ndege. *WERE YOU THERE? STATIONS OF THE CROSS*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000 (99 pages, \$15).

A Lenten gift, but a year-round treasure in both content and style. The story is old but the insights are new and moving.

Lear, Linda. *RACHEL CARSON: THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR OF SILENT SPRING*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1997 (634 pages, \$35).

Rachel Carson (of Silver Spring) began an ecological movement that affects all of us. Her life as a single woman dedicated to science was far more multi-dimensional than many imagined.

Neave, Rosemary, ed. *CONVERSATIONS IN THE CLOSET: CONNECTING SEX AND SPIRIT*. Ellerslie, New Zealand: Women's Resource Centre, 1999 (116 pages, \$26.95).

Good conversations that model how hard questions can be discussed critically among friends.

Paterson, Gillian. *STILL FLOWING: WOMEN, GOD AND CHURCH*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Council of Churches Publications, 1999 (142 pages, \$9.95).

A careful, critical reflection of the state of many questions following the World Council's Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women.

Rioja, Isabel Ramos, photos by Kim Manresa. *THE DAY KADI LOST PART OF HER LIFE*. Melbourne, Australia: Spinifex Press, 1999 (50 pages, \$14.95).

## Resources

The story, including powerful photos, of a four year old African child who goes through female genital mutilation. An advocacy tool of the first order. Read it, weep, and act.

Ross, Susan A. *EXTRAVAGANT AFFECTIONS: A FEMINIST SACRAMENTAL THEOLOGY*. New York: Continuum, 1998 (240 pages, \$24.95).

An admirable effort to explore what sacraments might look like if feminist insights were taken seriously by sacramental churches.

Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth and Herman Häring. *THE NON-ORDINATION OF WOMEN AND THE POLITICS OF POWER*. Concilium, 1999/3, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999 (142 pages, \$15).

A marvelous collection of essays, including Elisabeth's creative suggestions that women be appointed cardinals, that sets the agenda. Far from making a virtue of necessity, this volume shows the importance of getting the question right.

Sharma, Arvind and Katherine K. Young. *FEMINISM AND WORLD RELIGIONS*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999 (333 pages, \$19.95).

A helpful collection of general essays that will orient the reader to the current state of the art in religion and feminism. See also their *THE ANNUAL REVIEW OF WOMEN IN WORLD RELIGIONS*, VOL. V, 1999 (232 pages, \$12.95).

Stilliman, Jael and Ynestra King. *DANGEROUS INTERSECTIONS: FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON POPULATION, ENVIRONMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1999 (300 pages, \$20).

A multicultural global view of some of the hardest problems the world faces. In this collection, women are taken seriously as those who will make change happen.

Stimming, Mary and Maureen Stimming, eds. *BEFORE THEIR TIME: ADULT CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES OF PARENTAL SUICIDE*. Philadelphia:

Temple University Press, 1999 (192 pages, \$18.95).

A terribly painful topic handled in a courageous and helpful way. A great resource for pastoral people.

Vander Vort, Kay, Joan H. Timmerman, and Eleanor Lincoln, eds. *WALKING IN TWO WORLDS: WOMEN'S SPIRITUAL PATHS*. St. Cloud, MN: North Star Press, 1994 (190 pages, \$14.95).

When women do theology out of their own experience and with careful thinking, the sky is the limit. Here is the proof.

Zagano, Phyllis and Terrence M. Tilley, eds. *THINGS OLD AND NEW: ESSAYS ON THE THEOLOGY OF ELIZABETH A. JOHNSON*. New York: Crossroad, 1999 (144 pages, \$14.95).

Authors reflect on the impact of Elizabeth Johnson's work in Christology, ethics and so forth, with a modest response from her.

### For Our Children

Joslin, Mary, illustrated by Meilo So. *THE TALE OF THE HEAVEN TREE*. Grand Rapids, MI: Books for Young Readers, Wm. B. Eerdmann Publishing Co., 1999 (26 pages, \$16).

A beautiful text with a story sure to delight with its inclusiveness and light touch.

Sasso, Sandy Eisenberg, illustrated by Bethanne Andersen. *A PRAYER FOR THE EARTH: THE STORY OF NAAMAH, NOAH'S WIFE*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1996 (32 pages, \$16.95).

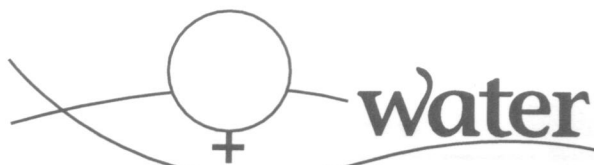
A lovely tale of a woman whose garden we inherited. For children of all ages.



Have a great reading summer!

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## Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network

Satoko Yamaguchi of the Center for Feminist Theology and Ministry in Japan, located in Tokyo, wrote about the Center's exciting opening ceremony in February 2000. WATER celebrated by sending some feminist books for the Center's growing library, an idea others might follow. More than 60 people attended, including a number of men. The Center's first newsletter is due shortly. For information, contact Satoko c/o Ohizumi Church, 2-23-54 Ohizumi Gakuen-machi, Nerimaku, Tokyo, Japan; fax 81-3-3922-3614.

Watch for confirmation in our fall issue of plans now afoot for the Network to gather on Friday, November 17, 3:45-6:15 p.m., in Nashville TN in conjunction with the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting. Make your travel plans accordingly.

*WATERwheel • Summer 2000*

## Web News

WATER's e-mail list is an active part of our current offerings. Hundreds of people from around the world post to it and read it, looking for snippets of information, ideas and exchanges with others who seek feminist theological, ethical and ritual innovations. Two particular issues captured attention recently.

The first was prayer. A post from a woman who explained that she was having trouble praying set it off. But the many, varied and helpful responses made clear that people have given lots of thought to this, indeed many have experienced the same difficulty. Hints for how to move beyond such a blockage, and insights into what it means to pray, flavored the list-serve for several days.

One Swedish Lutheran pastor noted wisely, "God is not deaf." Suggestions included a nature walk, a trip through the labyrinth, silence, singing, bibliographic options including Marjorie Procter-Smith's **Praying with Our Eyes Open**. It was a unique use of the list, but for some a welcome change from the standard meeting/conference/special event listings.

Another issue was the matter of "WATER chapters" or some kind of regional groupings

of people who share an interest, indeed a passion, for similar topics. People in Milwaukee WI; Cambridge MA; the Geneva, Switzerland, area; Cincinnati and Cleveland OH; Philadelphia PA; Nashville TN, among others, checked in as ready and willing to make things happen. Of course such interest is an organization's dream, and we at WATER are delighted to see the Alliance express itself in this form.

We suggest a three-step process:

1. Contact one another off-list by using individual (not water-l) e-mail addresses after making the initial contact on-list.
2. Take the initiative to invite people for a face to face meeting at your home/school/work. Let us know how we can be helpful. Use this newsletter or previous (indeed future) ones as resources for provocative themes, liturgical ideas and reading suggestions.
3. Let us know what you are doing so we can pass the word. The sky's the limit for small groups of committed people.

Interested in joining the WATER e-mail list? To subscribe send a message to [major-domo@hers.com](mailto:major-domo@hers.com) with the words "subscribe water-l" (that's water-hypen-letter "l", NOT number 1) in the body of the message.