



waterwheel

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

WATER at Twenty

by Mary E. Hunt

WATER's twentieth anniversary provided a great opportunity to gather more than one hundred women and men at Trinity College in Washington, DC, for a weekend of celebration and communal thinking. Greetings came from all corners of the world, making clear that the WATER Alliance is dynamic and growing.

The opening liturgy featured women ranging in age from ninety to two pouring water from many vessels as a sure sign that "woman river flows on." A PowerPoint presentation reprised the twenty years in images and photos of the myriad people who have collaborated in this work. The pictures tell the story of creativity and commitment.

Our invited speakers that night were WATER colleagues par excellence: **Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza**, professor at Harvard Divinity School, and co-founder and co-editor of the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*; **Kwok Pui-lan**, professor at Episcopal Divinity School, co-editor of *JFSR*, and member of the Pacific, Asian, and North American Asian Women in Theology and Ministry; and

the beginning of a new reality. Dream our dream." She went on to say, "I have called this feminist dream the *ekklesia* of wo/men, which is partially realized today in the struggles of wo/men-church around the world. Nevertheless, *ekklesia* of wo/men must not be reduced to wo/men-church because it is much greater."

Her definition of *ekklesia* was clarifying: "*Ekklesia* means the radical democratic congress, the alliance, the ingathering of wo/men. The concept and the vision of the *ekklesia* of wo/men stands in the lineage of Christine de Pizan, who in the 15th century envisioned the 'city of wo/men.' It seeks to bridge the divide between societal and religious wo/men's movements, between past and present, and between present and future. For Christian feminists it is another name for the *basileia*, the reign of G*d, the dream of a new heaven and earth free from exploitation and dehumanization, a promise that is given to all who hunger and thirst for justice."

Elisabeth cited four areas of change: (1) **Language**: "The feminist debate on essentialism, which questions the notion that

"If someone dreams alone, then this is only a dream. If many dream together, then this is the beginning of a new reality. Dream our dream."

Carolyn Farrell, BVM, director of the Gannon Center for Women and Leadership, Loyola University Chicago, and member of the BVM Women's Network. Each made insightful, helpful remarks that moved the look at the past into future mode. I share excerpts here to bring their wisdom to a wider audience.

Elisabeth began by quoting song lyrics to describe the dynamic of our common work: "If someone dreams alone, then this is only a dream. If many dream together, then this is

all wo/men have an essence in common which makes them different from men, has problematized the term wo/man because it too often assumes that wo/men are the same and it evokes a group of white upper-middle class women. However, rather than relinquish the self-designation wo/men, I have switched to write wo/men with a slash."

"Moreover, I use the term wo/men in an inclusive way because linguistically wo/man

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This thanksgiving season, we invite you to make a special gift to WATER for our 20th anniversary.



Lauren Dunn is all smiles as she redesigns WATER's Web site (www.hers.com/water).

WATER Thanks Two Summer Staff

Thank you to **Lauren Dunn** for bringing experience and enthusiasm to WATER through our Summer Internship Program. Lauren worked hard on our Web site as well as on her senior project on public policy from a Catholic starting point. She is now back at Tufts University doing a combined program in Comparative Religion and Studio Arts. We miss Lauren and wish her well.

Welcome to **Cynthia Carr** who comes from the St. Luke's Institute for our on-the-job training program, "In A Different Style." Cynthia brings excellent computer skills, including Web work, and a willingness to take on multiple tasks.

Editorial

In our most recent issue, we asked what difference twenty years of WATER has made. Responses have come in countless packages and we are grateful for all of them. As is obvious in this issue, the speakers at WATER's 20th anniversary celebration had plenty of ideas. We thank them for their generosity and their insights. We look forward to moving into the new decade with them and with all of you—our readers, supporters, and colleagues—as we expand and deepen the difference WATER makes.

Consensus seems to be that feminist work in religion has created multiple inroads into religious consciousness and theology, into religious structures and spirituality. Virtually no religious tradition is untouched by women's efforts to transform previously patriarchal or kyriarchal practice into shared religious wisdom.

Feminist work has created ways to shape a consistent egalitarian ethic. It has added a dimension to and deepened feminist political struggle. It has made it possible for many women to express their deepest beliefs in liturgy and ritual, in music and art without fear of censure. These are no small accomplishments and WATER thrills to the task.

Looking ahead, the issues are equally clear: young women want to shape the future of this work according to their needs; anti-racism work must be an integral part of everything we do; economic sharing will make or break this work as financial resources remain the biggest obstacle; the arts and music are crucial to the development of an integral approach; Wisdom Herself is delighted by our efforts.

So we launch a new decade, grateful, well accompanied, and serious about making even more of a difference.

In Memory of Her

Is a friend or relative celebrating a birthday or anniversary? Has a loved one died? You can honor her/him in a meaningful way through a gift to WATER.

From Margaret Hutaff, Cambridge, MA:

In honor of Lauren Dunn.

From Carol Scinto, Rockville, MD:

In memory of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's 65th birthday.

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...feminist work
remains.

...Twenty

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includes man, she includes he, and female includes male. In a language and thought system that uses the grammatical masculine as inclusive, wo/men have always to think twice, if not three times, to know whether we are meant or not."

(2) **Consciousness:** "Wo/men are slotted by birth into the group categories 'feminine' or 'masculine', 'black' or 'white,' 'American' or another nationality, belonging to the 'upper crust' of society or to the 'subaltern population.' These categories assign identity slots to us which we internalize in and through education and socialization. We find ourselves to be members of a gender or racial group that we experience as 'given' rather than understand as historically and socially constructed. Individuals cannot simply opt out of assigned group identities because social constructs such as sex, gender, race, class, nationality, or ethnicity are 'naturalized,' as 'common sense' knowledge, institutionalized and inscribed on the body..."

"Since religion plays a major role in such identity constructions and legitimizes them theologically, feminists in religion have made a great difference by developing theological knowledge, spiritual practices, and religious self-understandings that help us to question and change such kyriarchal identity slots."

(3) **Theology and religious studies:** "We have developed new knowledge of the world and the Divine, reconstructed wo/men's history, and recovered our religious feminist traditions as empowering heritage. We have critically investigated all areas of theology and religious studies and are struggling to change education, academic disciplines, religious teachings, and ethical horizons. Feminist theologians have sought to develop such knowledge in interaction with wo/men's groups and the wo/men's movements in society and religion. However, such different knowledge can only be produced if feminist scholars stand accountable not primarily to the academy or religious institutions, but to wo/men's movements like WATER."

(4) **Vision and spirituality:** "Feminists in religion like WATER seek to sustain the vision of the *ekklesia* of wo/men and the struggle for justice and global well-being by developing rituals and spiritualities that do not sustain



kyriarchal identifications but inspire and make possible the 'freedom of the children of G*d' and of the whole creation made in Her image."

Pui-lan picked up the thread in a storyteller's mode. She began with an explanation of the Chinese Taoist understanding of water as a feminine source of life, a symbol of replenishing energies. She proposed her own version of the word "WATER" as we use it, aptly renaming the five letters as follows:

W symbolizes water as a gathering place for women who seek to meet others, acts that have great consequences in the world.

A is the need to **acquire** a new tongue, and learn a new way of communicating in a globalized world (one-fifth of humanity speaks Chinese, for example).

T is a reminder to **tell** our own stories and listen to other stories.

E is the imperative to **expand** our horizons both personally and politically.

R is the need to **rejuvenate** our spirits with worship, community gathering, and intellectual work.

Pui-lan's sage remarks were followed by Carolyn's helpful overview of the Catholic scene as an example of one tradition in transition. She focused on her particular location with the BVM community and the Gannon Center at Loyola University Chicago as these intersect both with WATER and with the movements of religious and secular feminism. She deduced that the key is in the *Alliance*, what Webster calls "a close association for a common objective." She noted, "WATER members live in different parts of the world, are involved in a variety of life works. They are in different places in their faith journeys; however, feminist theology, ethics, and ritual are valued by them, critical to them."

Carolyn set the stage for discussion that followed: "It's a different world today, but feminist work remains. Many young women want no part of the term 'feminist;' rights yes, change yes, justice yes. There are more women theologians, who may or may not claim the title feminist. Power over remains the norm rather than power with. Inclusive language remains a challenge for most traditions.

Younger women are less attracted to women's networks and conferences than previous generations. Where is the Spirit today? Where is the prophetic call in the 21st Century of

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WATER Honors Four at 20th Anniversary

Everyone who has been part of WATER deserves an award. Thank you for your support. At WATER's 20th anniversary celebration we honored four people and organizations that have made contributions without which WATER would not be WATER. They represent the thousands of people and communities that take this organization into the future.



Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza

has given to WATER in every way, from her critically insightful ideas and strategies to generous financial contributions. We honor the person who made the first recorded financial contribution to WATER, and who served as the first Chair of the Board of WATER. She champions our work in print and in discussion. She enriches the Alliance with her constant support. She is, coincidentally, the only person to have slept overnight in the WATER office one hot summer night when she needed air conditioning to finish one of her wonderful books.

In honor of her deep commitment to women around the world and because many women—especially from developing countries—come to WATER to study, we inaugurate the **Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza Visiting Scholar Award**. It will support women who come to work on dissertations or to study at WATER. We can think of no greater way to honor our dear friend and colleague than by multiplying her energies through supporting generations of feminist scholars to come.



Carol Murdock Scinto is WATER's volunteer par excellence. She took "early" retirement at the age of seventy-five after more than 15 years of two days a week in the office as an exacting editor and resident encyclopedia. Before the Internet, we had Carol. She is beloved and has left an indelible mark.

One of her thankless tasks was to request review copies of books from publishers whose publications we list in the Resources section of the *WATERwheel*. That collection now has more than 6,000 volumes available for the borrowing. It will hereafter be referred to as the **Carol Murdock Scinto Resource Library**, in memory of her.



Patricia Horsely, educated by the Religious of the Sacred Heart, an architect by training and a justice-seeker by vocation, met Mary Hunt in Australia more than a decade ago. Her large spirit and commitment to justice for women and all who are marginalized meshed with WATER's mission. She has visited the office on her trips to the U.S., contributed very generously to our efforts, and held us in prayer and solidarity from afar.

Like so many hundreds of women and men around the world, Patricia Horsely is a valuable and essential member of the Alliance. We honor her *in absentia*. We inaugurate the **Patricia Horsely Award for International WATER Work** to be given to special colleagues who make WATER flow from afar.



Women-Church Convergence.

a coalition of thirty-six Catholic-rooted feminist groups, works toward a "discipleship of equals." Through its meetings, cooperative projects, and public statements, the Convergence is a voice for justice. While it has a special concern for transforming the Roman Catholic kyriarchy, the Convergence is first and foremost a coalition that seeks inclusive, empowering social structures.

"From Generation to Generation" Women-Church Convergence is a community of struggle with a vision of peace. WATER honors the Convergence with its first **Feminist Community of Struggle and Solidarity Award**.

This liturgy was planned for WATER's 20th anniversary celebration. Unite with us as you read it and adapt it to your needs as you celebrate a significant occasion. Thanks for being a part of the WATER community.

Call to Gather

Slide: WATER anniversary logo

Diann: For 20 years, from generation to generation, the WATER story has unfolded. Together we are like a river flowing on and on.

Song: "Woman River Flowing" by Carole Etzler

Slide: Waterfall

(Martha Ann Kirk dances to the refrain, then gestures to twelve women aged 90 to 2 to come forward with water vessels.)

Refrain: Womanriver flowing on,
Womanriver flowing on and on,
Womanriver flowing on and on,
Womanriver flowing on. *(Repeat)*

Intergenerational Blessing of Water

(Martha Ann dances to the verse.)

Womanriver, how you comfort me,
Flowing on through every century,
Flowing on to what is yet to be,
Womanriver flowing on. *(Refrain)*

Martha Ann gestures to

Janet Kalven who pours water into Carol Scinto's teapot, Carol pours into Cecilia Lapp-Stoltzfus's mug, who pours into Debbie LaFontaine's bowl, who pours into Min Hunt-Neu's cup, who pours into Tina Geiger's goblet, who pours into Jessica Weissman's vase, who pours into Carroll Saussy's jug, who pours into Meg Cullom-Levine's carafe, who pours into Barbara Cullom's chalice, who pours into Maura Stokan Wright's glass, who pours into Margaret Gonzales's pitcher.

(Martha Ann gestures to the women to put their vessels on the tables, then dances the last verse.)

Womanriver, flowing free,
I feel you moving in the heart of me,
Filling, touching every part of me,
Womanriver flowing on. *(Refrain)*

Introductions at Table

Diann: For 20 years, from circle to circle, the WATER Alliance has gathered. Who are we? Let us introduce ourselves at our tables, saying: "I am *name*. I celebrate WATER. I give you my hand." When all hands are linked, raise your hands, saying: "We give thanks for WATER."

Litany of Thanksgiving for WATER *(Barbara Cullom and Joy Barnes proclaim:)*

Barbara: Twenty years ago, the Holy One, Blessed be She, inspired Mary Hunt and Diann Neu to connect conversations, cross worlds, create an alliance of children, women and men who seek to challenge voices and actions of oppression, warfare, bigotry, and destruction. For the founding women of WATER, we give great thanks!!

Joy: Sophia, One of Changed Visions, we give thanks for women who see new visions.

All: Thank you. Gracias. Merci. Danke. Arigato. XieXie.



Barbara: Twenty years ago, the Holy One, Blessed be She, empowered Mary and Diann to gather a dozen women, respond to a need, raise their glasses, and create WATER.

Joy: Sophia, Hope-filled One, we give thanks for all visions of hope.

All: Thank you. Gracias. Merci. Danke. Arigato. XieXie.

Barbara: Over these twenty years, the Holy One, Blessed be She, has called others to work with these WATER women. From their shared visions have come an office with flexible walls, publications, parties, lectures, workshops, conferences, books, media responses, counseling, and rituals of all kinds, which bring around an endless series of tables a seemingly infinite array of faces, voices, cultures, hopes, dreams, and accomplishments.

Joy: Sophia, Setter of Tables, Joiner of Kindred Spirits, we give thanks for all who support WATER with contributions of all kinds.

All: Thank you. Gracias. Merci. Danke. Arigato. XieXie.

Barbara: For twenty years WATER has continued to rise—we give thanks!!!
To the future—we give thanks!!!

Joy: Sophia, Companion on the Journey, we give thanks for what has been, and for what is yet to be.

All: Thank you. Gracias. Merci. Danke. Arigato. XieXie.

The Story of WATER

Diann: For 20 years, from program to program, women have crossed worlds to gather, create, and bless the WATER community. Look at some of WATER's story and listen to some of the anniversary greetings we have received.

PowerPoint slides *(Handel's "Water Suite" plays throughout while women read greetings.)*

Liturgy of Thanks

By Diann Neu, Cindy I

From Gwen Benjamin, crone and frequent WATER visitor, Melbourne, Australia:

WATER works in collaboration with many women and feminist and justice organizations, both in the U.S. and across the world, seeking justice for women and the marginalized. WATER provides a much needed space, free from the constraints of patriarchal religious bodies, where women can think through issues of theology, ethics, and ritual; where interns, visiting scholars, and visitors from around the globe can use the remarkable resources of the Carol Murdock Scinto Resource Library.

From Susan E. Davies, Visiting Scholar 2000, Bangor Theological Seminary, Maine:

All my years of ministry I have been supported from afar by the likes of WATER, and WATER-wheel. Your newsletter sustains me, and thousands of women like me, who are doing the prosaic and essential work of preaching and teaching and administering and caring for congregations and other communities of faith. Those of us out in the "hinterlands" are immensely in your debt. You have given us resources and connections, assurance that there are thousands of others fighting the same small, huge, and essential battles each of us is fighting in our own arenas. You have changed the public discourse of the church, its liturgies, and its theological ethics. Uncountable numbers of women's lives have been blessed by your

struggle and your work. Flow on into the future, WATER, bubbling and laughing and serving scrumptious tea, wearing away the rocks of oppression, and carving new rivers of freedom.

From Coralie Ling, Visiting Scholar 1994-5, Melbourne, Australia:

The friendship, resources, international connections, and commitment to women I have experienced at WATER have been for me a great inspiration and an important part of helping me continue in ministry here. I send my congratulations on an amazing ministry of connection that Mary and Diann have espoused and a heartfelt plea that this ministry may continue. Sophia's blessing on a public ministry, an inclusive ministry, a creative ministry, a justice ministry at WATER, and may the water flow on.

iving for 20 Years

app, Barbara Cullom

From Herta Leistner, Director of a group of German women who studied liturgy at WATER in 1999, Eisenach, Germany:

20th anniversary! What a good number of years! You symbolize women moving theology and society... What strong and good networking! Be blessed in what you are doing and planning for the future.

From Sister Myra Poole, SSND, coordinator of the Dublin WOW conference, London, England:

This is to wish you all a wonderful weekend as you look back over 20 years of existence, assess how far you have come and your way forward. With love and thanks for all you have done for us.

From Kitty Stafford, WATER intern 1998, Dublin, Ireland:

All the best for your anniversary celebrations. Take care and mind yourselves!

From Solveig Boasdottir, Visiting Scholar 1995-6, Kopavogur, Iceland:

WATER has meant so much to me and my feminist development. Spending a long period of time at WATER (fall 1995 and spring 1996) writing my doctoral thesis was just what I needed... time to think and write... time to dig deep down into the field of feminist ethics and feminist theology... time to get to know WATER as an organization... hard work, apple pie, tea time, and a lot of fun in a marvelous mixture. Dear

WATER women, I wish you a happy anniversary and many fruitful years to come.

From Kerry Maloney, Chaplain, Bates College, Maine:

Heartiest congratulations for twenty years of wisdom, activism, analysis, agitation, and political-theological-ecclesial-economic sanity. I cannot imagine where we would be—or where I would be—without the vital work you do. Please accept my gratitude and esteem on this momentous occasion. Count me present in spirit!

From Janis Rohl, Women-Church, Boston:

Let the celebration begin and last the full year.



From Tom Gumbleton, Bishop of Detroit:
Many blessings on your good work.

From Mary Catherine Rabbit, President of the Loretto Community, Denver:

What a remarkable journey it has been for you!

From Rosemary Ganley, Assistant Editor, Catholic New Times newspaper, Toronto, Canada:

All admiration for your brave and pioneering work of the last 20 years, your powerful writing and analysis, and your eminently useable liturgies. Thank you for linking us up so we don't lose heart. Thank you for showing the way to handle nasty assaults without bitterness. Thank you, in short, for hardy faith, a sense of humor, and great love of women's agency. To the future!

From Katherine Goehle Heart, Hawaii:

Aloha! The ancient Hawaiians believed that the separation of the water from the land described in Genesis occurred in Hawaii as the volcanoes broke through the water and poured out lava forming the islands. So, too, the Goddess Pele provides power and dynamism under the WATER you have founded so that the new land of equality, justice, and freedom will be born from the WATER. Pele is "WELL PLEASED BY

HER DAUGHTERS"! (Katherine sent beautiful Hawaiian flowers for the celebration. Thank you!)

Song: "Let the Women Be There" by Marsie Silvestro, from *Crossing the Lines*, © 1987.

If ever I give birth to another person
Or create a work with my mouth,
my eyes, my hands,
(Refrain): Let the women be there,
Let the women be there,
Let the women be there by my side.

If ever I should cry from the pain of injustice
Let the tears I cry run down like a river
And set us free. (Refrain)

When I'm walking Spirit's breaths last journey
Let the wisdom I carry be the vision
I'm passing one. (Refrain)

Blessing Party Food

Diann: For 20 years, from generation to generation, from circle to circle, from program to program, from woman to woman, WATER women have been there, blessing food, bread, wine, and one another. Let us turn toward the food table, extend our hands, and bless our food and drink.

Diann, Barbara, Cindy: Blessed are you, Sophia Wisdom, Setter of Tables, for giving us this festive food and drink. We bless them in thanksgiving for the WATER community, for ourselves, for those who come after us, and for the slow and continuous peace in the world. May they strengthen us to celebrate and carry on.

Song and Spiral Dance: "Sister, Carry On" by Carolyn McDade, from *Sister, Carry On*, © 1992.

Sister, carry on, Sister carry on,
It may be rocky and it may be rough,
But Sister, carry on.

Sister, don't lose the dream, (2x)
Don't sell out for no short time gain
Sister, don't lose the dream.

Sister, we share the way, Sister we share the way
Heart to heart and hand to hand
Sister, we share the way.

Stand in solidarity, stand in solidarity
Together bring a brand new day
Stand in solidarity.

Sister carry on...

...Twenty

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women's concerns in the area of religion?"

We did not fully answer Carolyn's questions in the discussion before the party, but we began. As a result, plans are brewing at WATER for an intergenerational consultation for young women and seasoned scholars. We will seek deeper, more intentional ties with Trinity College, especially their women's studies and theology programs. We will broaden our commitment to interreligious work. We will encourage more people to take advantage of WATER's resource center and study opportunities as we develop a stronger public voice.

Saturday's panel featured a diverse group of activists who collaborate with WATER. They each looked at "Grassroots successes, needs and strategies." Kate Cudlipp represented **Seekers Community**, a small, independent, ecumenical Christian church in Washington, DC. She outlined that group's egalitarian praxis, its commitments to social justice, and its need to develop "a corporate way to speak truth to power." Kate affirmed that both Seekers and WATER "working together and with countless others, in solidarity as instruments of a greater, holy power, are essential to the transformation of the suffering world."

Janet Kalven, 90 years strong, spoke about **The Grail** (www.grailville.org), a women's organization with U.S. headquarters in Loveland, Ohio, where she lived for decades. She insisted on the need to create "free space" for women in religious and academic settings, speaking from experience having done so countless times. The Grail's "women defined theologies" program, like so many of their offerings over the long years of their work, create "successfully maladjusted" people who make change throughout their lives. Janet claimed that once you raise a question, it does not go away. It is in the world and does its work. No wonder patriarchal institutions fear women's work.

Elaine Guillemin graced the event from the **Canadian Catholic Network for Women's Equality**. CNWE has more than twenty years of experience in local groups and a National Work Group. Its Web site (www.cnwe.org) and e-mail list allow effective, economical communication, and the sharing of vast information. The group collaborates with a wide range of people and organizations, including members of the hierarchy of the Canadian Catholic Church, whom they treat as peers. She raised

helpful questions about issues we are reluctant to address, how to build a solid economic base for our work, and what marginalized women we might connect with in future efforts.

Jeanne Mackenzie brought the energy of the Presbyterian feminist group **Voices of Sophia** (www.voicesofsofia.org) to the table. She told how it grew out of the backlash against the 1993 Re-Imagining Conference and other conservatizing trends within that denomination. VOS holds annual gatherings, and stresses inclusive worship and integral spirituality with a focus on art and music. It is a constant presence at Presbyterian General Assemblies where it joins other advocacy groups to "create peace with justice and love." One of its great successes has been to involve and pass leadership to younger women—a good model for other groups.

Margaret Gonsalves, a Carmelite Sister from India and currently a WATER intern, spoke of her work with the **Conference of Religious, India**, a group of nuns from various communities. She shared her struggle in the Diocese of Vasai. She described the creative use of street theater to educate bishops about the needs and talents of women that can be used for the whole church. Margaret's skill as a storyteller brought the audience to India and India to the audience.

This panel of creative, committed women, chaired by Carroll Saussy, represents hundreds of others who are part of the Alliance, who could have told their stories and raised their questions as well. The sheer variety of their groups and the reach they have collectively speaks to where WATER is and is going.

To that end, participants named their dreams and wrote their suggestions for the next steps in our common work. Among them were those mentioned above—young women in the lead, anti-racism as integral to all efforts, interreligious action, and a strong public voice. Other dreams included "a feminist Pentecost," the development of a feminist retreat center, sharing feminist spirituality with women in nursing homes, encouraging ecofeminist work, wider use of the Internet to link us, conferences on women's health, feminist theological attention to political issues, more theo-political concerns, in short, an agenda for decades to come. Tune in in 2023 to see how we do!

In the closing circle all participants were sent home with miniature water carriers made of clay which they exchanged with one another to symbolize shared commitment. These vessels are a reminder that this work is concrete and hard, done together or not for very long, and as essential as water itself.

WATER's 20th anniversary celebration was marred by the decision of the Washington Theological Union to refuse to rent their space in nearby Takoma Park, MD, for the event. The reason cited was Mary E. Hunt's membership on the Clergy Advisory Committee of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, which supports women's rights to all necessary reproductive health services. Women-Church Convergence issued the following press release. WATER reaffirms its support for RCRC and congratulates the group on its 30th anniversary.

Women-Church Convergence Warns: Beware Patriarchal Theological Education

Washington, DC: Women Church Convergence deplores the scandalous decision made by the President of the Washington Theological Union, Daniel McLellan, to prohibit the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER) from using Washington Theological Union's space for their 20th anniversary celebration and the meeting of the Women-Church Convergence. WATER is a feminist educational group that provides resources for religiously based social change. Women-Church Convergence is a network of Catholic-rooted feminist organizations of which WATER is a member.

Despite the fact that the WTU advertises its facility for rent on a "space available basis," McLellan alleged that it would be inappropriate to rent to WATER because of the group's pro-choice position. He acknowledged that use of space in no way implied agreement with the views of groups renting space.

He cited WATER's Web page, noting that co-director Dr. Mary E. Hunt serves on the Clergy Advisory Board of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. RCRC supports women's right to choose even in the very limited number of late-term cases when women's health and well-being are in jeopardy.

Dr. Hunt invited President McLellan to discuss women's reproductive health issues and to discuss the content of her own pro-choice position, which he could not infer from the data cited. He refused the invitation and reiterated his refusal to rent space.

Women-Church Convergence strongly urges all justice-seeking people, especially women and members of religious communities, to consider carefully whether the Washington Theological Union is an acceptable place to study theology, take sabbaticals, display artwork, and/or participate in liturgical events.

Bookshelf

Adams, Carol J. *THE PORNOGRAPHY OF MEAT*. New York: Continuum, 2003 (192 pages, \$24.95).

A brilliant exposition of how a person becomes a piece of meat with devastating consequences all around. Illustrations, originally in a slide show, tell the whole story.

Bolen, Jean Shindola. *CRONES DON'T WHINE: CONCENTRATED WISDOM FOR JUICY WOMEN*. York Beach, ME: Conari Press, 2003 (116 pages, \$14.95).

In case you don't know: "A crone is a juicy older woman with zest, passions, and soul." The rest of the book spells out just how. Give it to crones you love, buy one for yourself, and look forward to your turn to enter the third phase of life with style.

Bond, L. Susan. *TROUBLE WITH JESUS: WOMEN, CHRISTOLOGY, AND PREACHING*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1999 (216 pages, \$19.99).

A good resource for the public proclamation of Sophia theology.

Chilcote, Paul Wesley. *HER OWN STORY: AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PORTRAITS OF EARLY METHODIST WOMEN*. Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 2001 (301 pages, \$25).

Forerunners of today's powerful United Methodist Women tell their own stories in vivid detail. Inspiring!

Cook, Ann Thompson. *MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE: A RESOURCE FOR DIALOGUE ABOUT THE CHURCH AND GENDER DIFFERENCES*. Washington, DC: Dumbarton United Methodist Church (3133 Dumbarton Street, NW 20007), 2003 (24 pages, \$5.95).

Buy this pamphlet and give it to your study group, your pastor, your friends and start talking knowledgeably about gender diversity. Move beyond rigid stereotypes of male and female, masculine and feminine, and meet people who expand the image of the divine. Photos here tell the story well.

Coston, Carol. *PERMACULTURE: FINDING OUR OWN VINES AND FIG TREES*. San Antonio, TX: Sor Juana Press, 2003 (104 pages, \$10).

A lovely little book about a big, powerful idea. Carol Coston tells her life story as it connects with the Universe

Story. This volume is part of a new series by women, especially women of color and women religious, that focuses on "co-creative partnerships." Read it and you will want to pick up a shovel!

Ellison, Marvin M. and Sylvia Thorson-Smith, eds. *BODY AND SOUL: RETHINKING SEXUALITY AS JUSTICE-LOVE*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2003 (393 pages, \$30).

Ten years after the Presbyterian Church turned down a progressive sexuality report, these powerful essays prove that the report was simply the beginning. Now with transgender concerns, HIV/AIDS, and sexual diversity of many sorts, careful reflection is needed more than ever.

Geoffrion, Jill Kimberly Hurtle and Elizabeth Catherine Nagel. *THE LABYRINTH AND THE ENNEAGRAM: CIRCLING INTO PRAYER*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2001 (116 pages, \$15).

A useful structure for getting the most out of this popular prayer form. Combine this with Jill's *PONDERING THE LABYRINTH: QUESTIONS TO PRAY ON THE PATH*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2003 (96 pages, \$12) and you will be well set to engage the experience.

Goldstein, Elyse, ed. *THE WOMEN'S TORAH COMMENTARY: NEW INSIGHTS FROM WOMEN RABBIS ON THE 54 WEEKLY TORAH PORTIONS*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2000 (474 pages, \$34.95).

A must-have for liturgists and those who seek feminist perspectives on well rehearsed texts.

Gorsuch, Nancy J. *INTRODUCING FEMINIST PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELING*. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2001 (144 pages, \$17).

A good guide for practical as well as theoretical insights into pastoral practice.

Goss, Robert and Mona West, eds. *TAKE BACK THE WORD: A QUEER READING OF THE BIBLE*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2000 (239 pages, \$20).

New biblical scholarship is emerging in response to lesbian/gay/bisexual and

transgender (read: queer) challenges to the hetero-centric readings of old. This is the first volume to really push the horizons in a sustained way.

Grey, Mary. *INTRODUCING FEMINIST IMAGES OF GOD*. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2001 (133 pages, \$17). A useful introduction to a central theological theme. Excellent bibliography to explore themes including Sophia, embodied theology, tragedy, and liberation.

Henderson, J. Frank, ed. *REMEMBERING THE WOMEN: WOMEN'S STORIES FROM SCRIPTURE FOR SUNDAYS AND FESTIVALS*. Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 1999 (384 pages, \$25) and the companion, *A PRAYER BOOK FOR REMEMBERING THE WOMEN*. Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications, 2001 (186 pages, \$15).

This remarkable man writes well, puts women first and foremost. With these volumes easily accessible there is no excuse for those who follow the lectionary to miss the useful cues to how to read the texts.

Leonardi, Susan J. *AND THEN THEY WERE NUNS*. Ann Arbor, MI: Firebrand Books, 2003 (205 pages plus study guide, \$14.95).

A novel about the sister of Julian Pines Monastery sure to open eyes and hearts to the real human beings who become nuns. Though fiction, the accounts of the members are rich and textured, believable and attractive. A compelling study in character development. A revealing look, albeit only one perspective and sure to be disputed, on why women choose religious life.

Raphael, Melissa. *INTRODUCING THEALOGY: DISCOURSE ON THE GODDESS*. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2000 (81 pages, \$17.95).

Another in the series introducing various themes in theology, this book expands to theology. Helpful overview of goddesses and the issues surrounding their worship and study.

Soelle, Dorothee. *THE SILENT CRY: MYSTICISM AND RESISTANCE*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001 (325 pages, \$21).

In what turned out to be her last major work, Dorothee Soelle explores mysticism as a resource for social justice. The argument is powerful, the documentation rich and evocative. What a valedictory!

Tanis, Justin. *TRANS-GENDERED: THEOLOGY, MINISTRY AND COMMUNITIES OF FAITH*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2003 (210 pages, \$19).

A wonderful exposition of transgendered issues by a person who knows the experience firsthand. This is a virtual compendium of information for pastoral people to consult, as well as a powerful story.

Youngdahl, Pat. *SUBVERSIVE DEVOTIONS: A JOURNEY INTO DIVINE PLEASURE AND POWER*. Tucson, AZ: Bean Pole Books, 2003 (116 pages, \$14.95).

Wonderful writing, provocative themes, and admirable spiritual insights make this a delightful addition to one's devotional collection. Sure to uplift by challenging, tending, and taking seriously the soul.

Children's Books

Mackall, Dandi Daley. *ANIMAL BABIES*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2003 (12 pages, \$6.99).

A sweet little book that affirms the variety of animal families, including our own!

O'Neal, Debbie Trafton, with illustrations by Benrei Huang. *ARE YOU SLEEPING?* Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2003 (32 pages, \$8.99).

A children's book that teaches "God is watching, God is watching" to the traditional French tune. Nice suggestions for activities and wonderful illustrations. Also, *TWINKLE, TWINKLE, LITTLE STAR* by the same author is a similarly styled gem that teaches "Twinkle, twinkle, shining bright in the velvet dark of night. Painted there by God above, watching over me with love."



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