

waterwheel

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

Feminist Ministry Today

By Mary E. Hunt

{The 2005 ordination of nine Roman Catholic women on the Saint Lawrence River occasioned a lively discussion of feminist ministry and ordination. Following is an excerpt from my lecture at the WOW, Women's Ordination Worldwide, conference held in Ottawa, Canada, July 22-24, 2005. For the full text of the talk see www.women-churchconvergence.org. While the content is specific to the Catholic community the implications are far wider as many traditions grapple with the matter of ministry.}

I see feminist ministry as a lynchpin in our theo-political situation. If we build even the hint of hierarchy into our community we capitulate to forces that would love our blessing. Imagine instead if feminist ministries became synonymous with interreligious international social justice. We are not far from it since the majority

parse it, ordination as such, and especially in the Catholic tradition, conveys rank order. Encouraging, recognizing, and blessing feminist ministries does not.

Feminist efforts to talk about ordination in a discipleship of equals face the serious problem of squaring this circle. While I appreciate that ordination should not mean hierarchy, I think we finesse the question at our peril. I prefer to put our collective weight behind the matter of feminist ministry in the many forms feminists (women and men) put our talents to use doing justice and building our communities. That way we are in no danger of falling into the kyriarchal trap of orders. At the same time, those whose talents and training take them in the direction of what has traditionally been the work of ordained ministers can still exercise their gifts without fear of contradiction, cooptation, or scandal.

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of women I know who have been interested in the question of ordination at one time or another are actively involved in justice work, whether as lawyers, teachers, government officials, social workers, professors, pastoral ministers, musicians, eco-farmers, writers, or the like. Thirty years ago Roman Catholic women could not be ordained. Today we cannot **not** minister.

While I consider the need for feminist ministries crucial, I am dubious that ordination is the most useful rubric for our thinking, for two reasons. First, no matter how we

Second, even in some of our best efforts in the U.S., we have let ordination drive the train while women seem to be left in the station. Whether Women's Ordination Conference (WOC) or Women's Ordination Worldwide (WOW), or any other coupling of words that substitutes for feminist ministry in a discipleship of equals, it is my observation that what attracts the most attention is "ordination." There is a certain logic to this since it is our intention to lift up the unjust, theologically incorrect teaching that prohibits

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Witness Wagon Stops at WATER



Marjorie Kildare, Canada



June Boyce-Tillman, England



Dina Cormick, South Africa

International visitors at WATER, who joined the Witness Wagon, a tour of feminist religious sites from Washington, DC, to Ottawa, Canada, July 2005.

Editorial

Questions about why feminist / womanist / mujerista work in religion is so crucial are answered by the horrendous suffering in the Gulf region of the United States in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. What began as a so-called natural disaster turned into a national disgrace of gargantuan proportions. It need not be that way.

Environmental writer Bill McKibben, author of *THE END OF NATURE*, contends that our planet is in an even more delicate balance than anyone ever imagined. So the rise of a few degrees of temperature, global warming, creates dramatic changes. We are learning the hard way. There are no more "acts of God," just what people do every day that contributes to or forestalls environmental destruction. Ecofeminist work in religion is a constructive alternative, easily accessible to anyone who is interested in squaring faith and the environment.

The national disgrace which was the response, or lack thereof, to a hurricane of biblical proportions, is also a human construction. Thousands of dead people, hundreds of thousands displaced, and millions traumatized could have had another outcome if core values of equality and justice had been honored.

Evacuation plans that leave the poor and vulnerable behind were apparently acceptable to government officials. Old people, little ones, weak and ill persons count for little in 21st century America, or so it would seem. Feminist theologies address these issues with a preferential option for women and children who, along with poor men, bore the brunt once more.

The soft underbelly of U.S. racism is now exposed for the entire world to see. New Orleans has a sizeable African American population, many of them poor. People who carry the scars of slavery now have the fresh wounds of being left behind, literally. Anti-racism work is an integral part of feminist work in religion.

So while we urge generosity to the survivors of this catastrophe, we double our efforts to provide feminist religious resources that inspire and sustain a different way of life.

*While I consider the need for feminist
that ordination is the*

Feminist Ministry

(Continued from page 1)

women from being licitly ordained. There is power in resistance. There is justice in naming wrong by its name. Inclusion must always triumph over exclusion. But it is still a defensive—not offensive—move to ask for ordination, a reaction—not a construction.

I worry that in the current climate even our best efforts to confront kyriarchal powers result in reinscribing the importance of ordination and, however inadvertently, elevating those who are ordained. By doing so, we pass over the power of women worldwide who are engaged in various efforts to create a just world. From my participation in WOC's 1975 conference in Detroit, through the WOW gathering in Ottawa, the most important experience of our movement for me has always been living as a feminist community united in sacrament and solidarity, a discipleship of equals struggling, however imperfectly, to be church.

Just as "women-church" gives new meaning to the word "church" by including women and others who have been marginalized, so, too, does "feminist ministry" instead of women's ordination change the default assumption that ordination is primary, that kyriarchy sets the agenda. It puts the emphasis instead on women's and, yes, feminist men's many forms of committed service. It leaves behind once and for all the hierarchical trappings we saw on display during the papal transition.

One of our success problems as a movement is that we have a variety of perspectives on ordination—what it means, whether to do it illicitly, how to understand it in a wider theo-political context. We have varying views on professionalism in ministry including whether some people should be paid for what they do and, if so, who and why. We are thinking through the training necessary for new models of ministry, as well as who supervises

and approves such programs. We have not yet grappled with matters of liability and malpractice.

Given this complexity, there is something comforting about relying on the tried and now known to be untrue system of bishops or the equivalent who will make such decisions or using the old model of religious congregations to assess fitness and belonging. But I caution against all of this as a dangerous lack of imagination and/or a dubious passing over of the new context in which we find ourselves. I suggest we look for ways to coordinate and amplify our ministries so as to be more efficient in doing justice against very efficient forces to the contrary and to build up our communities as places where love and hope dwell. The question is how, for which I will conclude with several concrete suggestions.

When the balcony doors opened at St. Peter's after the sham conclave "*Habemos papam*" was intoned, and out came his nibs dressed to kill, down to the red shoes that had been out of papal vogue for years, I realized that the problem was not simply that Cardinal Ratzinger had been elected pope. I am not sure I would have been happy if Jesus had been elected for the simple reason that the process was so utterly flawed: bereft of any input from women, lay people, or children; undemocratic and elitist. The papacy is meant to be a symbol of unity, not a person with authority.

I realized that about the only thing that could have rescued the sorry Vatican scene from what I predict will be history's harsh judgment would have been if the doors had opened and an African woman, HIV positive, with her baby in her arms had come out onto the balcony proclaiming the love of Wisdom-Sophia for all of creation, the imperative of Wisdom-

(Continued on page 3)

*nist ministries crucial, I am dubious
most useful rubric for our thinking...*

...Ministry *(Continued from page 2)*

Sophia that justice be done. What a symbol of unity she would have been! Our tears of joy at such a miracle would have cleansed the world as we went about actualizing the ministry of a catholic church worthy of its name. Instead, we got Cardinal Ratzinger.

I mourned the failure of religious imagination and vowed then not to postpone what we envision. I urge us to live the vision of radical equality now, however imperfectly, rather than participate in what oppresses. I urge us to listen with special attention to what young women are saying about the world and the church they want. To that end, I propose four criteria we can consider as we develop new models of feminist ministry in a discipleship of equals:

First, our ministry must be *feminist* in the deepest sense of that word. The full personhood of women, the very survival of millions of women and their dependent children is in the balance. We have feminist resources aplenty to guide not a liberal, corporate approach to ministry, but one which weaves the experiences and talents of willing workers with the pressing needs of the day. Feminism, far from outmoded, is a deep well of successful struggles against racism, sexism, colonialism, heterosexism, and the like that can help set priorities and implement strategies that work.

Second, the implications of our choices must be *evaluated in global terms*, not simply in terms of local options. While all ministry like all politics is local, choices we make, styles of ministry we embrace have implications beyond any given shores. Training programs, ministerial preparation, even ministry will vary, of course. But especially those of us who live in so-called developed countries must resist the tendency to imperialize our styles and criteria, and thus perpetuate colonial

Christianity in feminist dress. This is a tricky balance given the unequal distribution of resources, but it is no excuse for setting up a parallel system that excludes and diminishes the contributions of the world's majority.

Third, feminist ministry is *not denominationally specific, but interreligiously connected*. That is why excessive concern about Roman Catholic ordination is, in my view, misplaced. It is an important issue of principle, of course, but in the present context it can function as a distraction from the collaborative work we need to be about to do justice. Indeed there are already many Catholic women ordained as Episcopalian and Lutheran priests who are no less Catholic for it, just as there are women ministering in countless communities who have not needed a papal pat on the head for their work to flourish.

Fourth, feminist ministry is *justice-seeking activity*. Grounded in the pain of exclusion, we began our movement for ordination as a matter of justice. Along the way, as our feminist ministry deepened we have joined our forces with those who seek to eradicate poverty, to provide health care, to eliminate HIV/AIDS, to stop war, to live simply in communities and families that do justice.

These criteria for ministry, that it be feminist, global, interreligiously connected, and justice-seeking, offer a common starting point for hearing different voices and evaluating different choices as we carry out our various feminist ministries in a discipleship of equals. I have every confidence that Sophia in her Wisdom will bless our efforts to live them out with integrity. Then, just as we break bread and share wine "in memory of her," our daughters and their friends will take up their ministries in memory of us.

Mary E. Hunt, Ph.D., is cofounder and codirector of WATER, mhunt@hers.com

Eyewitness Account from the New Office

By Carol Murdock Scinto

Despite reports of salinization, depletion, polar melt, and impending doom all over the planet, the WATER table is as fresh, pure and life-sustaining as ever, if not more so.

From its new location on the Third Level of the World (building), the fountainhead is awash in light, ambiance, and nourishing nourishments like unto the loaves and fishes except tastier.

Your intrepid reporter can attest that the decor is delightful, the shelves neatly aligned and dusted, and the space—the space!—gives the impression of...well, great spaciousness, whatever the square footage.

Inaugurating a new season of WATER hospitality recently were the Mesdames Lapp and her three lovely little fishes, Grandma Carol Scinto and her Grand Amanda, and hostesses Mary Hunt and Diann Neu with their mermaid, winsome Min Hunt-Neu.

We toasted dear friends from the Antipodes to the Arctic in the one true beverage (water), and laughed a lot and enjoyed superb cuisine, including the fruits of Cindy Lapp's garden.

At home in the World that's WATER! You were much with us in spirit.

In Memory of Her

From WATER:

In memory of **Mary Virginia Lawrence, SNDdeN**, whose warmth and wit graced many people. Her skillful counseling and wonderful writing gave her a unique window on and door to the world.

In memory of **Marian Kelley**, a teacher who loved children dearly, and companion to Margaret Smith, rscj, with whom she lived her support for Roman Catholic women's ordination to a renewed priestly ministry.

From Cynthia Schultz:

In memory of **Hildegard Kohlwes**, beloved partner and cherished friend.

From Marlis Korber:

In memory of **Eugenie "Gene" Korber**, 1914-2005, mother, friend, and wise soul who wrote, "Keep what is worth keeping and with a breath of kindness blow the rest away."

This liturgy, "A Feminist Eucharist," was created for and used at the Second International Ecumenical Conference of Women's Ordination Worldwide which was held in Ottawa, Canada, in July 2005. It celebrates feminist ministry in the Christian tradition.

Call to Gather

Bon Soir. Good evening. Guten Abend. Buenos noches. Welcome to this feminist eucharist. Tonight, we assemble at the table of Divine Wisdom as church, a kindom of priests, a discipleship of equals, claiming our call to ekklesial ministry. We gather to recognize, bless, and encourage the range of ways feminists put our talents to use doing justice and building our communities. We come to break bread, do justice, and proclaim the wonderful deeds of Divine Wisdom-Sophia around the world.

Let us introduce ourselves to one another by creating a kindom of priests. All together, in a litany style, call out your name. Call out where you are from. Speak a word or phrase that names your ministry in the discipleship of equals. Let us extend our hands and lay hands on one another. Please pray after me:

Prayer: O Divine Wisdom, Spirit-Sophia, / You call us to be church, / a kindom of priests / a discipleship of equals. / Bless us to break bread and do justice / that the people of God may live.

Song: "Claim Your Power" by Marsie Silvestro, **Crossing the Lines**, c. 1987.

Refrain: Woman, let the spirit in your heart, Rise up (rise up) to claim your power, (2x).

We are women gathered here.
Bringing all our gifts we share.
The truth has empowered us.
We're working for justice.
We are... We are Women-Church. *Refrain*

Though struggle has its pain, we stand,
Shaping presence in our hands.
We encircle this hour
claiming sacred for our power.
We are... We are Women-Church. *Refrain*

We bring the wisdom of the old;
While calling on what visions hold
We're making connections
from all Earth's directions.
We are... We are Women-Church. *Refrain*

Candle Lighting

(Five women each light a candle to remember women disciples)

We light these candles to remember women disciples, named and unnamed, who throughout time have used their ministry to transform the world. We call upon these foresisters to help us claim the power of Divine Wisdom and the ways to

use it to break bread and do justice. Our sung response to each name is: "A woman is a woman through another woman."

Song: "A Woman is a Woman" by Marsie Silvestro, from **In Avalon**, c. 1995.

Refrain: A woman is a woman through another woman. The circle begins and there is no end.

A woman is a woman through another woman. The circle still is and it's growing.

Spirit of MARY MAGDALENE, the first to announce Jesus' resurrection, foundation of Women-Church, disciple to the disciples. *R:*

Spirit of JUNIA, a woman apostle imprisoned; PHOEBE, presider of a local church; PRISCA, a minister who supported herself; THECLA and the other women leaders of the early house church movement who were called to a discipleship of equals. *R:*

Spirit of TERESA OF AVILA and CATHERINE OF SIENA, Doctors of our Church, who challenged the corruption of the institutional church during the Renaissance. *R:*

Spirit of FEMINIST MINISTERS and THEOLOGIANS, ALL WOMEN WHO SPEAK OUT AGAINST OPPRESSION in all of its forms, and ALL WOMEN WHO BREAK BREAD AND DO JUSTICE. *R:*

Let us speak aloud the names of other FEMINIST MINISTERS who have claimed their ministry as church. *(Add other names.)*

Song: "A Woman is a Woman" by Marsie Silvestro, from **In Avalon**, c. 1995.

Litany of Women-Church

Please respond to each line in the following litany by saying, "And then there is Women-Church, a kindom of priests."
 . In my life there are strong women...
 . In my life there are liberating struggles...
 . In my life there is priest pedophilia, episcopal cover-up scandals, the closing of parishes by bishops to pay for abuse claims...
 . In my life there is the increasingly conservative kyriarchal institutional church represented by Pope Benedict XVI...
 . In my life there are closed doors...
 . In my life there is a worldview that baptizes and confirms privilege for some and oppression for others...
 . In my life there is the immoral war in Iraq, the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the name of national security, the destruction of the environment...
 . In my life there are racist, sexist, heterosexist, colonialist attitudes...
 . In my life there is spiritual hunger...
 . In my life there is wealth through resource sharing and networking...
 . In my life there is urgency to actualize

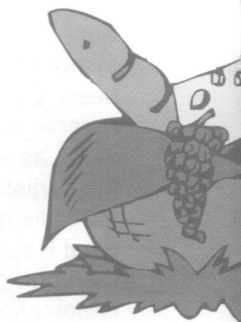
feminist ministry in a discipleship of equals.. In my life Name others and we will respond. *(Sharing)*

Song Refrain: Woman, let the spirit in your heart, Rise up (rise up) to claim your power. (2x)

Reading from the Book of Wisdom
(Two readers proclaim)

1: Wisdom has built herself a house; she has prepared her food, mixed her wine, and set her table... she calls to all in the cities and in the town... come and eat of my food and drink of the wine I have made. *(Proverbs 9:1-5)*

Sung Refrain: Wisdom inside you is rising like a mighty wind.



A Feminist Honoring W Break Bread a By Diann L. Neu, with n

2: Who can find a valiant woman? She is far more precious than jewels. Give her a share in what her hands have made. Let her works tell her praises *(Proverbs 31:10). Refrain:*

1: Wisdom calls aloud in the streets... I will pour out my heart to you... tune your ear to wisdom and your heart to truth... then you will understand who God is and discover love of life... you will understand justice and the ways of happiness *(Proverbs 1:20, 2:1,6). Refrain:*

2: Wisdom is clothed with strength and dignity, and she laughs at the days to come... Many are the women of proven worth, but you have excelled them all *(Proverbs 31:25, 29). Refrain:*

Reading 2: From "I Remember Union: The Story of Mary Magdalen," by Flo Aeveia Magdelena

There will be among all women the peace of a million years of dreaming and women will rise together, young and old, and their song will be unity.

And all nations shall be as stars shining in the same sky with the same intention: to light the way of humankind.


The days shall number years and millenniums, and it shall come to pass that moments are all the same, simultaneously.

Then all woman-knowledge and all the

words of learning will be reborn into awareness and all will be understood.

And women will reach out from their souls and their hearts and their vision will be unity, truth, and order and despair shall be lifted and transformed into a rainbow of peace.

And all women shall rejoice and dance within, and rise together as the ways of humankind become the way of angels, and there will be a coming together of all in one moment.



ALL: And the way will be lighted with the energy of women and they will join hands across the earth and the sky, to signal the end and the beginning.

Song: Wisdom inside you is rising like a mighty wind.

Eucharist: Women Who Do Justice Music by Marsie Silvestro

Reflection

We have proclaimed the ministries of our forefathers; we have heard the call of Wisdom Sophia and been challenged to light the way. Now we must ask ourselves, "How do I break bread and do justice?" Let us take a minute for quiet reflection, then let us take five minutes to share with someone next to us. (*Sharing*)

Song: Wisdom inside you ...

Eucharistic Prayer

1. Praise to you, God of our Mothers, Source of Life, for you created a diverse world, and you created us in your image and likeness, the image of love, of power, and of beauty. You call us to be your kindom of priests, and so we raise our hands and our voices, singing:

Sung Acclamation (to Amen): We give thanks. Merci. Danke. Gracias. Xie-Xie.

2. Praise to you, God of Sarah, Hagar, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah, for you promised that all families of the earth would be blessed through a covenant with these our foremothers. You called them to be your kindom of priests, and so we raise our hands and our voices, singing:

Sung Acclamation:

3. Praise to you, God of Mary, Mother of Miriam's Child and Sophia's Prophet, for you cared for our ancestor who agreed to partner with you in bringing Jesus to birth. You called her to be one of your kindom of priests, and so we raise our hands and our voices, singing:

Sung Acclamation:

4. Praise to you, Wisdom Sophia, Companion on the Journey, for you have built yourself a house. You have hewn seven pillars; you have prepared a rich banquet for us. You call us to be your kindom of priests, and so we raise our hands and our voices, singing:

Sung Acclamation:

ALL: Praise to you, Divine Wisdom Sophia, for you gave us Jesus, who gathered the community for a meal, took bread and fruit of the vine, gave you thanks, and gave them to all, saying: (*extend hand, palm up*) "Take this, all of you, and eat and drink. This is my body. Do this to remember me." You called him to be one of your kindom of priests, and so we raise our hands and our voices, singing:

Sung Acclamation:

5. Praise to you, God of Tecla, Phoebe, Junia, Prisca, for you raise up strong women house church leaders to transform your church. You called them to be one of your kindom of priests, and so we raise our hands and our voices, singing:

Sung Acclamation:

6. Praise to you, Divine Wisdom, Sophia-Spirit of Justice and Healing, for you pour out your Spirit on this bread and wine and on us gathered here. You call us to heal a fragmented church, to mend broken hearts, and to feed hungry souls. You call us to be your kindom of priests, and so we raise our hands and our voices, singing:

Sung Acclamation:

ALL: Praise to you Divine Spirit, Justice Seeker, Sophia Wisdom, for you pour out your Spirit on this bread and wine and on us gathered here. Bring the new creation: the breaking of bread, the doing of justice. You call us to be your kindom of priests, and so we raise our hands and our voices:

Sung Acclamation:

Communion Song: "Song for the Journey" by Marsie Silvestro

Refrain: When justice calls out your name, prepare yourself for a journey, Going out, going on, going home.

Be steadfast of heart and strong along the way, And know that my voice is your song. And if you should fall or your steps become unsure, Know that I am with you on the road.

Let laughter be your bread and friends the wine of life, Gathering your self in my name. And if you should cry, let cleansing be your gift of knowing I am with you even then.

Commissioning

Let us take the breaking bread and doing justice of women-church, a kindom of priests, a discipleship of equals, 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 elders and to those who seek wisdom, to the exiled and to those who understand freedom, to the hopeless and to those who see visions.

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 men of every race and place, to the young and old of every neighborhood, to the next generations and to their children of every nation.

Let us go forth in the name of Divine Wisdom, Sophia-Spirit! Let us go forth to actualize feminist ministries! Let us go forth to empower the world!

Greeting of Peace

We now share with one another the peace that comes from this power, the peace that is given to the kindom of priests. Let us share this peace of our lives.

Song: "Let the Women Be There" by Marsie Silvestro, **Crossing the Lines**, c 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, (2x)
Let the women be there by my side.

If ever I should cry for the pain of injustice, Let the tears I cry run down like a river and set us free. **Refrain**

And when I'm walking spirit's breath's last journey, let the wisdom I carry be the vision I'm passing on. **Refrain**

Liturgy by Diann Neu of WATER, dneu@hers.com. Music by Marsie Silvestro of Moonsong Productions, marsiemoon@earthlink.net.

Women-Church Celebrates Ministries in Discipleship of Equals

The Women-Church Convergence celebrates the variety of ministries Catholic women are exercising as a "Discipleship of Equals" throughout the world. We greet the ordinations on July 25, 2005, on the St. Lawrence Seaway as an example of women's efforts to live out their baptismal calls in new and creative ways.

We declare a heightened need for feminist models of church that stand in sharp contrast to the morally, spiritually, and, in some cases, economically bankrupt Catholic patriarchal institution. The Convergence urges feminists to explore and live out new models of ministry and community that reflect our commitments to egalitarian structures and democratic processes as church.

We praise all women who seek to do their ministry, teaching, social work, pastoral work, and liturgies as part of radically inclusive communities. Putting their talents to the service of the whole community, these women demonstrate Gospel values. Our colleague, Victoria Rue, one of the ordinands, does so through creative theatre, compassionate hospice work, and teaching.

Women-Church Convergence urges those who are being ordained to ignore the pressures and condemnation from the Vatican. We invite them instead to understand their place in and accountability to a Discipleship of Equals that welcomes their feminist ministry and embraces them warmly as sisters. May they signal a new, non-hierarchical model of church in everything they do.

Women-Church Convergence is a coalition of autonomous Catholic-rooted organizations, raising a feminist voice and committed to an ekklesia of women which is participative, egalitarian, and self-governing. For more information: www.women-churchconvergence.org.

JFSR 20th Anniversary Conference Update

The Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion, Inc., an organization co-founded by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Judith Plaskow, celebrated its twentieth anniversary in June 2005 at Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, Massachusetts, with a five-day conference focused on "Teaching for Change: Creating Knowledge, Transforming Institutions." More than eighty colleagues from thirteen countries engaged in rigorous discussion and festive fun as they sketched out future trajectories.

Panels of scholars from around the world looked at themes including Critical Reflection on Experience, Structural/Institutional Analysis, Feminist Knowledge and Pedagogy, Teaching for Change. Conversations around the edges and over delicious meals added a depth and intensity to the gathering as participants appreciated the opportunity to be together for a field-shaping event. Funding from the Wabash Center, the Luce and Ford Foundations made it possible.

A highlight of the event was an evening celebration at Harvard Divinity School of the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* chaired by Co-Editor Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. A marvelous PowerPoint presentation featured pictures of dozens of contributors over the years, some looking quite young because they were! In a panel presentation Judith Plaskow, founding co-editor, offered her wisdom on the past. Another former co-editor, Emilie Townes, reflected on how JFSR shaped the field. Current Harvard Divinity School student Molly Gower talked about what it is like to have this wonderful resource available for academic use. Former Managing Editor Elizabeth Pritchard opened up discussion of the future, a task that continued at the conference.

Working groups systematized their reflections and plenary conversations provided an opportunity for cross fertilization of ideas. The groups envisioned a range of next steps (not all to be carried out by JFSR, but needed by the field as a whole) including web sites, research and scholarship, translation and bibliographic projects, religion and public policy work, collaborative projects, solidarity efforts, and, of course, many new strategies for the classroom and beyond.

Creative rituals and music offered by a religiously diverse team added a spiritual dimension to the time together. An evening of talent sharing and dancing showcased the variety of skills in the group. Who knew that esteemed scholar Kwok Pui Lan is a stand-up comic by avocation or that feminist scholars from around the world can dance up a storm?

WATER congratulates JFSR on twenty years of distinguished publishing. We wish JFSR, Inc. many more years of creative programming. Feminist work in religion is more important than ever!

Essay Contest

The Resource Center for Women and Ministry in the South is sponsoring its third essay contest. Women eighteen years of age and older may submit previously unpublished nonfiction essays of 1400 words or less.

Essays should focus on or exemplify feminist perspectives on spirituality and daily life. We want women to write about their lives, grace, how they experience God, or how they make it through the hard places. No sermons, please.

Prizes will be \$500 for first place, \$300 for second place, and \$200 for third place. The winning essay will be

published in the RCWMS newsletter, *South of the Garden*, in March 2005. Winners will be notified by mail.

The limit is two essays per person. Submit four double-spaced copies of each essay. Do not put your name on the essay. Attach a cover letter with the title of the essay(s), your name, address, phone number, and email. Submissions must be postmarked by November 15, 2004. Mail submissions to: RCWMS Essay Contest, 1202 Watts Street, Durham, NC 27701.

No email submissions are permitted. Manuscripts will not be returned. This essay contest is made possible in part by a grant from the Clifford A. and Lillian C. Peeler Family Foundation.

Clooney, Francis X. **DIVINE MOTHER, BLESSED MOTHER: HINDU GODDESSES AND THE VIRGIN MARY.** New York: Oxford University Press, 2005 (264 pages, \$26.99).

This comparative reading of Hindu texts with Christian texts on Mary is a notable achievement. It allows new questions to flow about the nature of the divine, letting gender issues take their rightful place in mutually enriching conversation.

Cook, Ann Thompson. **AND GOD LOVES EACH ONE: A RESOURCE FOR DIALOGUE ABOUT SEXUAL ORIENTATION.** Washington, DC: Dumbarton United Methodist Church, 2004 (20 pages, \$5.95, 2nd edition).

This second edition of a popular pamphlet published by Dumbarton United Methodist Church needs to be on the literature rack in every Christian church. Maybe then the ignorance and discrimination will end. Meanwhile, recommend this simple, well written resource with its compelling pictures and welcoming message.

Corley, Kathleen. **WOMEN & THE HISTORICAL JESUS: FEMINIST MYTHS OF CHRISTIAN ORIGINS.** Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2002 (254 pages, \$20).

A comprehensive look at the textual insights on women in Christian scripture with some helpful suggestions for next steps in that important research.

Enander, Glen. **ELISABETH SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA: SPIRITUAL LEADERS AND THINKERS.** Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2005 (102 pages, \$23.95).

The life and work of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza is laid out for young readers. Pictures, chronology, glossary, and bibliography make this a great model for how to gain wide access to the work of our foremost feminist thinkers.

Fletcher, Jeannine Hill. **MONOPOLY ON SALVATION? A FEMINIST APPROACH TO**

Resources

RELIGIOUS PLURALISM. New York: Continuum, 2005 (15 pages, \$24.95).

By giving up a "monopoly on salvation" Christians can engage in real dialogue with persons of other faith traditions. The author is indebted to Gordon Kaufman and other forward looking theologians who realize that without many faiths there is no salvation.

Gebara, Ivone. **OUT OF THE DEPTHS: WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE OF EVIL AND SALVATION.** Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2002 (211 pages, \$20).

Ivone takes on "evil" from a feminist perspective, associating it with the poverty women experience in an unjust world. Her invitation to rethink fundamental systematic categories in light of women's experience is welcome.

Grey, Mary. **THE UNHEARD SCREAM: THE STRUGGLES OF DALIT WOMEN IN INDIA.** New Delhi: Centre For Dalit/Subaltern Studies, 2004 (102 pages, £5, available from Sarum College Bookshop, 19 The Close, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP1 2EE, UK, bookshop@sarum.ac.uk).

This is feminist liberation theology in a new key—the voices of Dalit women—as they begin to articulate their own theology. Mary Grey has done a service of solidarity to bring them to international attention with such respect and dignity.

Holland, Suzanne, Karen Lebacqz, and Laurie Zoloth, eds. **THE HUMAN EMBRYONIC STEM CELL DEBATE: SCIENCE, ETHICS, AND PUBLIC POLICY.** Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001 (257 pages, \$24.95).

There are few resources on these tough issues by feminist ethicists. This collection reflects a variety of faith traditions as well as a range of positions. It lifts up the impact of policies on women who are poor and

marginalized, an often passed over concern.

Isasi-Diaz, Ada Maria. **LA LUCHA CONTINUES: MUJERISTA THEOLOGY.** Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004 (270 pages, \$24).

In this second volume of essays Ada builds her mujerista theology in conversation with her community and with other scholars in religion. She emphasizes *lo cotidiano*, the stuff of daily life, as the locus of theological work.

Jennings, Jr., Theodore W. **JACOB'S WOUND: HOMOSEXUAL NARRATIVE IN THE LITERATURE OF ANCIENT ISRAEL.** New York: Continuum, 2005 (288 pages, \$26.95).

While not focusing on women's experience in the Hebrew Bible, this volume makes a significant contribution to understanding the homosexual dimensions of the text.

Limb, Gillian. **20 YEARS OF SPIRITUAL JOURNEYING: ORDINARY WOMEN-EXTRAORDINARY LIVES.** Catholic Women's Network, 2004 (59 pages, £4, Contact: Mairin Valdez, 17 Hillbrow, Reading, Berkshire, RG2 8JD England).

These stories are sure to ring some bells for many readers who have come of age spiritually in the past few decades. The British Catholic Women's Network celebrated its 20th anniversary with this collection of stories by writers including Mary Grey, Dorothy McEwan, Alexina Murphy, Myra Poole, Susan Roll, Rosemary Radford Ruether, among others, who witness to various ways Catholic women handle the contradictions of a patriarchal faith and the possibilities feminist perspectives present.

Myers, David G. and Letha Dawson Scanzoni. **WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER: A CHRISTIAN CASE FOR GAY MARRIAGE.** San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005

(180 PAGES, \$17.95).

For those who think marriage is a good in itself, this book argues that if it is good for heterosexuals it is good for homosexuals. A useful resource to counter the conservative arguments with traditional values even though many progressives question whether marriage is the best way to construct a society.

Schaberg, Jane. **THE RESURRECTION OF MARY MAGDALENE: LEGENDS, APOCRYPHA, AND THE CHRISTIAN TESTAMENT.** New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2002 (379 pages, \$35).

Read this worthy sequel to *THE ILLEGITIMACY OF JESUS* for an exhilarating look at what imaginative reconstructions do to challenge theological givens. Written in partnership with Virginia Woolf, Jane Schaberg trains her scholarly eye on the woman who gave voice to Jesus' resurrection.

Scheib, Karen D. **CHALLENGING INVISIBILITY: PRACTICES OF CARE WITH OLDER WOMEN.** St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004 (166 pages, \$13.59).

Older women deserve the best pastoral care possible. This handily written compendium of cases helps counselors see the issues and act in the best interests of the women.

Sylvester, Nancy, IHM, and Mary Jo Klick, eds. **CRUCIBLE FOR CHANGE: ENGAGING IMPASSE THROUGH COMMUNAL CONTEMPLATION AND DIALOGUE.** San Antonio: Sor Juana Press, 2004 (161 pages, \$16.95).

Engaging impasse is described by women who pioneered this new model with Nancy Sylvester and Mary Jo Klick. Mary McCann's helpful overview of the process opens the experience to readers who then see how women including Patricia Bruno, Rose Mary Meyer, Margaret Swedish, and Mary E. Hunt, among others, found their way.



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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 theological, ethical and liturgical development for and by women. We work locally, nationally, and internationally doing programs and projects, publications and workshops, counseling, spiritual direction, and liturgical planning which help people actualize feminist religious values and bring about social change. If you would like to subscribe for weekly updates from the office and occasional news from colleagues in the field, send a message to majordomo@hers.com with the words "subscribe water-1"

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WATER Fall Programs

September 29, 5pm - 7pm, Thursday:

WATER Open House and Office Blessing.

We have moved! Join us as we bless our new office in the World Building, 8121 Georgia Avenue, Suite 310. RSVP by September 26, 301.589.2509 or water@hers.com

October 6, 1pm - 3pm, Thursday:

Seasons of Survival: Rituals for Women with Breast Cancer with Diann Neu of WATER and Ginger Luke of River Road Unitarian Church.

October is Breast Cancer Month. This is a seminar for woman surviving breast cancer, clergy women, students of theology, campus ministers, hospital chaplains, friends and loved ones. We will focus on the rituals women with breast cancer need and how to create and use rituals with women with breast cancer, their friends, and loved ones.

Place: WATER at the World Building. RSVP by October 3 to Diann Neu, 301.589.2509 or dneu@hers.com

October 30, 4-7pm, Sunday:

A Ceremony of Memory and Hope: A Feminist Interfaith Ritual of Remembrance, Healing and Empowerment

Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER) and The Adult Enrichment and the Pastoral Care Programs of River Road Unitarian Church invite all to join hearts and minds in creating a healing ritual and communal reception honoring all who have or have had breast cancer, their friends, colleagues and loved ones.

Place: River Road Unitarian Church, 6301 River Road, (on the corner of River and Whittier, entrance off of Whittier), Bethesda, Maryland, 301.229.0400.