

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

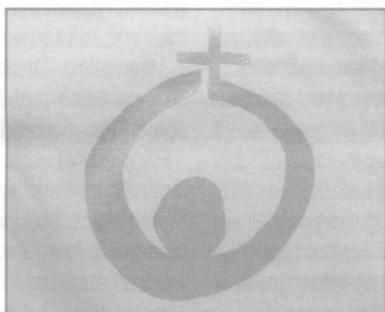
Women-Church Looks Forward and Back

Mary E. Hunt

The twenty-fifth anniversary of the Women-Church Convergence provided the backdrop for a forward-looking conference on "Catholic Feminist Ministries," 17-29 August 2007 in Chicago, Illinois. It was an exciting and inspiring event that marked a new moment in the life of the movement. It was also a lot of fun!

I was among the planners and speakers so my view is by no means unbiased. I offer an overview of the experience in order to inform, update, and encourage others to add their thoughts as well. Of course, many *WATERwheel* readers come from traditions other than Catholicism or Christianity. But perhaps a look at this event—how one group seeks to be religious on our own feminist terms—will give inspiration and hope to others.

The women-church movement arose out of the discontent of Catholic women with second class citizenship in our own church. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Diann L. Neu coined the term (see the Epilogue to Elisabeth's *In Memory of Her*). It was never meant to be a church of women, and it still is not. Rather, "women-church" comes from the fact that "church" in its origin signified free males who made decisions for their women, children, slaves, and animals. Only by adding "women" could the possibility of a "discipleship of equals" (another of Elisabeth's helpful neologisms) be realized. Small base communities arose where women (and, in some instances, men too) could be religious in ways that dovetailed with our politics. Rather than trying fruitlessly to overhaul kyriarchal Catholicism, we chose to be church, women-church.



The Women-Church Convergence that sponsored the conference is a coalition of more than thirty-five Catholic-rooted groups that raise their feminist voices together in the struggle for justice and seek to live out egalitarian, non-hierarchical models of community. This approach provides a broad canopy for

many ways of being church, many issues to be addressed, and many styles of working. Well into our third decade, we have had our share of successes as well as challenges. While many movement participants who began as young women are now middle aged or older, happily at this conference there was an animated group of younger women eager and competent to take on leadership.

The conference reflected the twenty-five years of struggle. It began with a warm introduction from Donna Quinn, longtime Chicago-based activist who had welcomed people to the first conference, "From Generation to Generation: Woman Church Speaks" in Chicago in 1983 where it all began. Tables in the festively decorated room were adorned with the names of friends and colleagues who have died. They reminded all of us how fleeting is our chance to make a difference and how lucky we are to walk in the footsteps of women who made the most of their opportunities. Their spirits were a blessing on the group as bits of their stories were told and their deeds remembered, prompted by a wonderful PowerPoint presentation of the women-church story.

Feminist theologians Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Mari Castellanos opened the

(Continued on page 2)



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Summer 2007 WATER Interns Meet with Australian Colleague

(l. to r.) Eleanor Carey from Bryn Mawr College; Patricia Horsley from Rose Bay, Australia; Meg Cullom-Levine from the University of Maryland; Julie Bir from Grinnell College.

Editorial

Kudos to the Nobel Prize Committee for honoring Al Gore this year and to Al Gore for tireless work in protecting Earth's future. But does global warming really trump all other social problems? Is it true that unless we stop the eco-madness there will be little else to worry about? Should everyone drop everything else and work exclusively on environmental issues? Sometimes the high volume rhetoric of certain ecologists makes it seem that way. If so, aren't we lucky at WATER that we do not have to change our name!

Here is a case when "yes" and "no" are both the right answers from a feminist perspective. Only fools deny that Earth's well-being is in danger. From the melting polar caps to the loss of animal species, from the rampant fires to the raging Katrinas, there is ample evidence that the delicate balance has long since been upset. As Bill McKibben noted in *The End of Nature*, gone are the days when Nature was distinct from the rest of us. What were considered "acts of God" hardly exist any more. Human influences on the very planet itself—such as the use and abuse of fossil fuels—have a lot to do with what happens. We have no one to blame but ourselves, no one to make amends to but our children. Eco work is a top priority.

Nonetheless, we are not all responsible in the same way. Those who live in developing countries have not contributed as much as those of us in affluent lands, especially the U.S., who consume many times more than our fair share of the planet's resources. Decisions to build bigger, gas guzzling cars, bigger, faster airplanes, more golf courses to water, and jet skis to carve up the coastlines are well beyond where most of us have input. But just as we can learn to "refuse, reuse, recycle" our plastic bags, so too can we figure out more eco-friendly ways to live on many other fronts. This is the new Golden Rule.

Still, **quality** of life on Planet Earth is not trivial. Ecofeminists lead in showing the way especially to those who in their enthusiasm for a healthy planet may forget some of its people. To a mother whose baby is discriminated against because of racism, ecology is but an abstraction. To a poor family without access to health care, concern for the earth is decidedly secondary. To a nation at war, ecology is but a dream.

As Gloria Steinem observed, when confronted with an either/or choice, take both. Best to follow her advice, coupling concern and strategizing about the environment with all of the longstanding social justice concerns. One-issue analysis and action is over. It will take more than a village. But everyone, not just feminists, needs to get with the program.



Women-Church ...

(l. to r.) In plenary conversation: Mary E. Hunt, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Mari Castellanos, Diana Hayes.

(Continued from page 1)

conversation with powerful and spirited reflections on "Women-Church: The Open House of Divine Wisdom." Their experiences and analysis set a constructive tone. The evening prayer was "Drawing from Wisdom's Wells," a blessing for ministry.

Saturday morning, womanist theologian Diana Hayes offered her insightful reflections, and I followed on "Catholic Feminist Ministries." From our various starting points we looked at the concrete ways women are living out their commitments. The world, not any one church, was our focus though, understandably, the Roman Catholic Church came under special scrutiny. Then, in plenary conversation we joined Elisabeth, Mari, and the audience to grapple with our diversity, how to think about our ministries, and where to put the energies of the movement at a time of serious backlash.

The afternoon working groups focused on the five areas of our common ministries: Political, Community-Building, Feminist Theologies, Spiritualities for Justice, and Gender/Racial Justice. Two by two women led sessions on peace-making, feminist parenting, theological education, the use of the arts in social change, feminist forms of prayer, and many other topics that reflect the range of ministries among us.

It was exciting to realize that what began with concern for the exclusion of women from ordination and decision-making in one religious institution has grown to encompass a global agenda. At the same time, women are still prodding that institution to conform to gender inclusive standards. As we heard reports from the various groups it was obvious that women-church pervades many segments of society through its myriad ministers. How to amplify our public voices and claim our ministries as "catholic" remain challenges.

By Saturday evening we were ready to celebrate and party. A festive Eucharistic banquet included the blessing of breads and drinks by many women from around the world (see liturgy in this issue) and a delicious meal. The liturgy demonstrated that the women-church movement is part of globalized efforts to break bread and do justice. Thus no single way, no one element, is

sufficient to encompass the many ministries. As the Grail movement teaches us, "together we are a genius." It showed that night.

"The Chicago Outskirts," a 17 piece women's jazz band (to be recommended highly), played tirelessly while we danced into the evening. Our dancing—everyone welcome equally on the floor, sparking and encouraging one another, enjoying each other's company—was an apt metaphor for the movement called women-church. We have different gifts, but one spirit indeed!

On Sunday morning the working group leaders made brief statements about their work and suggestions for how the women-church groups might collaborate. Moving testimony from two Muslim women about their war-related experiences capped a powerful session. The closing blessing and circle dance that sent us home renewed and re-committed mirrored women-church's energy.

Participants were by no means all from the Catholic tradition. Mennonites and Muslims, members of the United Church of Christ, and those who favor no particular religious brand were all a part of the mix because our concern is justice in the world, not simply equality in one denomination. It was helpful to be clear on that as we explored "catholic feminist ministries" keeping the "c" small, the "feminist" broad, and the "ministries" varied. Far from backing off of demands that one tradition, i.e., Catholicism, be inclusive, we have extended our concern to the world.

A caucus focused on and by young women proved that the women-church movement has a promising future. There are many women in theological education and religious studies engaged in activist teaching, ministering, and otherwise living out the vision of women-church who are ready and willing to bring their generation's energy to the movement. Let their numbers multiply! They join the legion of committed women who have lived out and are living out their faith with integrity under duress from kyriarchal religious authorities.

The conference was a wonderful chance to come together and feel the power of the whole. For me, that was the highlight of the weekend. Sometimes, whether at WATER or

(Continued on page 6)



Introducing Anna Roeschley: 2007-8 Visiting Associate at WATER

In the crisp, colorful spirit of fall I extend greetings to you who are connected to WATER. After being at work with WATER for nearly two months now I have gotten to know a number of you as you have passed through the WATER office doors, through encountering your work in the Washington, DC area and around the globe, and in corresponding with you. I look forward to the more rich WATER connections ahead!

I come to WATER having graduated in May, 2007 from Bluffton University (OH) where I studied Communication in Church Organization (a program which integrates communication practice and theory with theology and religious studies) as well as Peace and Conflict Studies. I first became connected to WATER when I picked up a copy of Diann Neu's *Return Blessings: Ecofeminist Liturgies Renewing the Earth* at Corrymeela, a reconciliation center in Northern Ireland where I was living and working through Bluffton's study-abroad program. I knew then that there was something unique about WATER, but had no idea that someday I would find myself working alongside Diann and Mary right here!

WATER is a very fitting "next step" in which to invest myself after college. During my senior year I became especially interested in the interconnection between ecofeminist spirituality and embodied communication practice/theory and epistemology. Through a year-long departmental honors project I explored these themes through my disciplinary lens of communication and religion, weaving

together a final project which calls for a re-integration of an embodied, feminist Divine into our conception and encounter of the Divine as central to holistic ways of communicating and knowing.

Of course, this sort of exploration is ongoing and I now look forward to plugging these energies into the work happening at WATER. Among the spectrum of things to be involved with here, I am especially drawn to the Seasons of Survival project and am helping create additional resources for women and loved ones in need of healing. It is also neat to be a part of the important "networking" that takes place, helping to connect feminist theologians from all over the world through conferences, online venues, and database collections.

My being with WATER takes place in collaboration with Mennonite Voluntary Service, a 1-2 year program that enables volunteers to partner with church communities throughout the U.S. and Europe in working for peace and justice. I live in a row house with five other volunteers, sharing in the joys, challenges, and everyday tasks of communal life. Prior to moving to DC, I spent a few months on the family farm in central Illinois where I grew up and will always have deep roots.

I am grateful for the many "pieces coming together" that led me to WATER and anticipate fresh, exciting pieces of life in the year ahead. Thank you for joining with me, through WATER, in nurturing spaces of transformation where holistic community and justice-doing can take place.

In Memory of People of Wisdom

From Diann Neu and Mary Hunt, Silver Spring, MD: In loving memory of *Mary Kathryn Rawlings Neu*, mother of Diann and five other children, a lively light, a fun-loving person who showed many how to enjoy life. We remember her as she rests in peace.

From Deb LaFontaine, Cheryl Nichols, Carol Scinto, Carolyn Farrell, Terry Donohue, Mary's Pence, Cindy Lapp, Cynthia Schultz, Joanne Satterfield, Kathy Shorter, Kathy Nietch, Barbara Klim: In memory of *Mary Kathryn Rawlings Neu*, Diann's beloved mother.

From WATER: In memory of *Letty M. Russell*, feminist theologian, church changer, social justice champion, model of hospitality.

From WATER: In memory of *Annie Lally Milhaven*, a writer and a nurse whose words and deeds healed and challenged.

From Miriam Nesmith, Forth Worth, TX: In memory of *Kate*.

From Joanne Lounsbury, Cincinnati, OH: In memory of *Mary Rose Geckle*, who worked tirelessly within the system to bring appropriate healthcare to the mentally disadvantaged.

From Anna Roeschley, Washington, DC: In honor of *Ariel Kennell* and *Stephanie Kennell*, for their lives, their spirited womanhood, their friendship.

From WATER: In memory of *Claire Randall*, a pioneer in ecumenical work and an inspirational advocate for women's religious leadership.

From Mary Brewster, Laurel, MD: In honor of *Mary Claire Brewster*, *Louis R. Brewster*, and *Marie and Earnest Borgman*.

From Rev. P. V. Phillips, Campbell, CA: In honor of deceased parents, *Loretta Brannack Phillips* and *Richard Betts Phillips*.

From Lisa Hill, New York, NY: In honor of *Mary Florence (Flo) Hill*, a dear mentor from the Silver Spring Presbyterian Congregation.

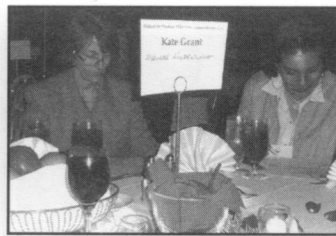
From Paula Tusup, Seattle, WA: In honor of *Marcella Sink*, *Paul Sink*, *Carol Manske*, *Sheila Barnes*, *Kathy Morse*, and *Cleo Molina*.

From Marilyn Schiller, New York, NY: In honor of *Katie T. Grimm, M.D.*

From Carolyn Farrell, Dubuque, IA: In celebration of the *BVM Jubiliarians*. Cheers!

From Rosemary Ganley, Peterborough, Ontario: In honor of *Marjorie W. Burns* and *Mary Anne Ganley*.

From Diana Trebbi, New York, NY: In honor of *Emilia Casale* and *Renato Trebbi*.



(l. to r.) Diann Neu; Sheila Daly of the USA; Giselle Hernandez of Mexico; Sister of Africa.



Wisdom's table set for feminism

This Eucharistic meal was planned for and celebrated at the 25th Anniversary, "A Women-Church Forum: Celebrating Catholic Feminist Ministries," 17-19 August 2007, in Chicago, IL.

Gathering: (*Dancers bless the space by billowing a cloth as people enter.*)

Song: "Wisdom's Table" adapted from "Jacob's Ladder," Spiritual.

We are gathering at Wisdom's table, (3x)
Sisters, brothers, all!
Wisdom's flowing all around us...
We are dancing Wisdom's circle...
On and on the circle's moving...

Call to Gather

Leader 1: ¡Buena tarde, Mujer-Iglesia!
Gutenabend, Frau-Kirche! Bonsoir, Femme-Église!
Good evening, Women-Church!
Feminist ministers celebrating 25 years and 20 centuries of breaking bread and doing justice as women-church, welcome to this Eucharistic Banquet of Divine Wisdom.

(*Several say welcome in different languages*)
Bienvenue.... Huan Ying.... Willkommen....
Fáilte.... Benvenuto.... Oideyasu.... Shalom....
Bienvenidos.... Mabuhay.

Leader 2: (*using Spanish and English*)
A reading from Proverbs 9:1-3, 5-6.
Wisdom has built Her house,
She has set up Her seven pillars...
She also has set Her table.
She has sent out Her wo/men ministers
to call from the highest places in the town...
"Come eat of my bread
and drink of the wine I have mixed.
Leave immaturity, and live,
And walk in the way of Wisdom."

Leader 1: Tonight we feast together at Wisdom's table. We welcome and celebrate feminist ministers on every continent. Continuing Wisdom's tradition, the tradition of the early Christian community, we take, bless, break, eat, and drink at a Eucharistic banquet. We gather in memory of Miriam's child, Sophia's prophet, Jesus. We honor dreamers and prophets, feminist ministers around the

world who continue the traditions of a discipleship of equals.

Song: "Let the Women Be There" by Marsie Silvestro, *Crossing the Lines*, © 1986.

If ever I give birth to another person,
Or create a work with my mouth,
my eyes, my hands.
Let the women be there... Let the good men be there...
Let the children 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.

And when I am walking
Spirit's breath's last journey,
Let the wisdom I carry
be the vision I'm passing on.

Blessing the Lights

An Elder: (*A dancer brings her light.*)
Let us welcome the light of the first candle into our hearts: the light of wisdom among us.

A Young Woman: (*A dancer brings her light.*)
Let us welcome into our hearts the light of youth among us.

All: (*Dancers gesture to light at tables.*) Let us welcome the light of community among us.

Blessing the Breads

Leader 1: In solidarity with feminist ministers on each continent, and in all places of worship and religions, we take, bless, break and pour, eat and drink three breads and three drinks.

(*Two women representing South America hold tortillas and pray in Spanish and in English.*)

Blessed are You, Divine Wisdom, for giving us these tortillas representing feminist ministers in Central and South America. With them we celebrate the beauty and power of the discipleship of equals living in the best of struggles from Argentina and Chile to Mexico and Nicaragua, from Brazil to the Caribbean, all throughout Central and South America.

Feminist ministers in Central and South America, we bless these tortillas in solidarity with you. (*They put the bread on the table.*)

Eucharistic Banquet Diann

Song: Tune "Amen," Traditional, adapted.
We give thanks. Arigato. Gracias. Merci.
Xie-Xie.

(*Two women representing Africa hold injera and combread and pray in Swahili and in English.*)

Blessed are You, Divine Wisdom, for giving us this injera and combread representing feminist ministers in Africa. With them we celebrate the beauty and power of the discipleship of equals living in the best of struggles from South Africa to Egypt, from Ghana to Ethiopia, all across the continent of Africa.

Feminist ministers in Africa, we bless this bread in solidarity with you. (*They put the bread on the table.*)

Song: We give thanks. Arigato. Gracias. Merci. Xie-Xie.

(*A woman representing Europe holds multi-grain bread and prays in German and in English.*)

Blessed are You, Divine Wisdom, for giving us this multi-grain bread representing feminist ministers in Europe. With them we celebrate the beauty and power of the discipleship of equals living in the best of struggles from Sweden to Ireland, from Germany to Spain, from Russia to Italy, all across Europe.

Feminist ministers in Europe, we bless this bread in solidarity with you. (*She puts the bread on the table.*)

Song: We give thanks. Arigato. Gracias. Merci. Xie-Xie.

Leader 1: There are so many more breads we

Refreshed by the Spirit of WATER

Carol Armstrong-
Moore



I want to extend my sincere gratitude to WATER for welcoming me this past summer as an Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza Visiting Minister. I am an ordained United Methodist woman considering a move from Arizona back to my hometown of Washington, DC. To begin my search for work in a social justice ministry, a dear friend said: "You should talk to Mary Hunt!" What a fine piece of advice that turned out to be.

Not only did Mary put me in touch with a WATER supporter who generously provided housing for my entire family, she also invited me to spend time with her at the WATER office.

To anyone who finds herself in the DC area, I recommend that you plan a visit to WATER. Those lovely rooms filled with books and sunlight gave me great nourishment for my journey. From the summer interns' new energy, to Diann's incredibly gracious spirit, to Mary's delightful wit and wisdom, I was surrounded by a community of women who truly embody their cherished feminist values. I returned to the desert refreshed by the spirit of WATER and I thank you all for your wonderful work.



Women's Multi-Faith Groups

Mary E. Hunt

The upsurge of negative images about Islam and the fear for their lives that cursed through Muslim communities in the wake of the attack on U.S. soil gave rise to creative, supportive groups of women who met to learn more about one another's lives and faiths. Some of those meetings have resulted in organizations that provide services, education, and shared prayer for their members. It is a new religious phenomenon that has much to teach the rest of us.

Harvard's Pluralism Project, ably headed by Professor Diana L. Eck and staffed by Kathryn Lohre, is researching the emergence of women's multi-faith groups after 9/11. The "Women's Interfaith Initiatives After 9/11" met this fall in Cambridge, MA under the auspices of the Radcliffe Institute to learn from and about these groups. WATER was one of several sister organizations included to discuss similarities and differences, to offer advice and receive insight. It was a rich and fruitful time.

The new groups include SARAH (Spiritual and Religious Alliance for Hope) in Orange County, CA; WISDOM (Women's Interfaith Solutions for Dialogue and Outreach in Metro Detroit) in Michigan; Women Transforming Boundaries in Syracuse, NY; Sacred Circles at the Washington National Cathedral in Washington, DC; and Interfaith Action Women's Initiative in Sharon, MA. Each reported on efforts to strengthen ties among women in their regions through innovative programming and community building.

As a feminist theologian I am interested in how the groups will develop. How they incorporate feminist religious scholarship and action into their programs will be important. It will also be instructive to see how they avoid being marginalized. Often when women's groups engage in service work, include lay as well as ordained people, and concern themselves with children as all these groups do so well, they run the risk of auxiliary status. Macro ecumenical work of the bi- and tri-lateral sort is still considered by some to be the real thing despite its spotty track record.

The clearest message of the meeting was that women's multi-faith groups put to rest the myth that the real interreligious heavy lifting is being done by predominantly male organizations. Those groups have a lot to learn from women who invite others into their homes, take time to visit one another's places of worship, and worry about one another's children. I think the multi-faith movement is in good hands.



(l. to r.) Marissa Valeri; Monika Altenbeck, Theresa Yugar, Aisha Taylor; Soona Samsami; Donna Quinn, Kathy Power-O'Brien, Kathleen Desautels, SP.

Women-Church...

(Continued from page 2)

in my local, beloved women-church group SAS (Sisters against Sexism), I feel as if what we are doing is important and useful, but that we could be doing so much more if only we were many more. On Sunday morning at this conference, as woman after woman articulated her ministry and what energized her to engage in it, the light went on for me. I realized that the ultimate triumph of patriarchal religions is to divide and conquer women, to make us feel

alone, few, or weak. But we are none of these!

Women-church is the vehicle by which we are together, many, and strong. While I cannot be engaged in every ministry, through women-church I am connected to those who are working with homeless people, eradicating domestic violence, stopping war, praying with imagination, or teaching in academic institutions. And they are connected to my efforts to live in right relation, to bring about social justice, to honor Sophia.

Twenty-five years into a movement is still the early days if it is to endure. Those who have

given women-church its energy and shape deserve congratulations and thanks. Those who will carry it to new places and in new ways deserve inspiration and support. All of that was on the program in abundance in Chicago. The fiftieth celebration will demonstrate how well we use those gifts. Sophia willing, I'll be there, whether in person or as a name on a table. In any case, the movement is what matters and it is doing its work.

Mary E. Hunt, Ph.D. is cofounder and codirector of WATER.

Belzer, Tobin and Julie Pelc, Editors. **JOINING THE SISTERHOOD: YOUNG JEWISH WOMEN WRITE THEIR LIVES.** Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003 (227 pages, \$18.95).

Every tradition should be so lucky as to have its best and brightest reflect on their faith. This book is a model of how women join the progression of adult believers in smart, critical, and loving reflections on their religious heritage.

Besserman, Perle. **A NEW KABBALAH FOR WOMEN.** New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005 (192 pages, \$21.95).

Mystical teachings (Kabbalah) can be just as fraught and vexed for women as laws. This introduction to the field alerts the reader to "the joy and sweetness of the Shekhinah."

Cherry, Kittredge. **ART THAT DARES: GAY JESUS, WOMAN CHRIST, AND MORE.** Berkeley, CA: AndroGyne Press, 2007 (96 pages, \$38.95).

When the words become flesh in art there is no denying that change is in the wind. Kitt Cherry captures powerful changes in understandings of gender and sexuality as they play out in the Jesus stories. Innovative, startlingly provocative images with insightful commentary, this book is suitable for coffee table and classroom.

Eaton, Heather and Lois Ann Lorentzen, Editors. **ECOFEMINISM & GLOBALIZATION: EXPLORING CULTURE, CONTEXT, AND RELIGION.** New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003 (253 pages, \$27.95).

The editors have collected a wonderful sampling of the field (Ivone Gebara, Aruna Gnanadason, Mary Judith Ressa, Rosemary Radford Ruether, among others). The collection is a testament to the power of ecofeminism to bring about global justice. Paired with Heather Eaton's **INTRODUCING ECOFEMINIST THEOLOGIES.** New York: T & T Clark, 2005 (144 pages, \$29.95), the two make a solid introduction to the field.

Egnell, Helene. **OTHER VOICES: A STUDY OF CHRISTIAN FEMINIST APPROACHES TO RELIGIOUS PLURALITY EAST AND WEST.** Uppsala, Sweden: Studia Missionalia Svecana C, 2006 (369 pages, 250 SEK or \$39 +P&H, contact sim@teol.uu.se).

The emerging women's inter-faith groups would do well to read this study. Finding one's way to inter-religious community is difficult work,

Resources

requiring critical thinking and careful sifting so as to avoid essentializing and to encourage diversity. This Swedish colleague handles it admirably.

Erickson, Victoria Lee and Susan A. Farrell, Editors. **STILL BELIEVING: JEWISH, CHRISTIAN, AND MUSLIM WOMEN AFFIRM THEIR FAITH.** Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005 (154 pages, \$20).

How thoughtful feminists remain part of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam is the subject of this collection. Of course, each one handles it differently, given family, faith, and other obligations. But these scholars prove that being a believer does not mean leaving one's politics at the door.

Evans, Sara M. **JOURNEYS THAT OPENED UP THE WORLD: WOMEN, STUDENT CHRISTIAN MOVEMENTS, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE, 1955-1975.** New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003 (286 pages, \$24.95).

Ruth Harris, longtime executive staff member of the United Methodist Church, had the wisdom to gather fifteen women whose lives were shaped by the YWCA and YMCA and student Christian movements to reflect on the impact of those experiences on their lives. Jeanne Audrey Powers, Alice Hageman, Charlotte Bunch, Jan Griesinger, and Valerie Russell (as remembered by Letty Russell) speak candidly and movingly about cutting their social justice teeth on anti-war, anti-racism, and other struggles.

Hearon, Holly E. **THE MARY MAGDALENE TRADITION: WITNESS AND COUNTER-WITNESS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES.** Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004 (208 pages, \$24.95).

Storytelling is not a neutral, fluffy activity, but deeply shaped by and shaping of cultures. The intense interest arising in Mary Magdalene is a case study in how the rhetoric plays.

Kirk, Martha Ann. **WOMEN OF BIBLE LANDS: A PILGRIMAGE TO COMPASSION AND WISDOM.** Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004 (376 pages, \$16.95).

Whether tucked in one's bag on a dig or pilgrimage, or read as a collection of stories about women in the Middle East, this creative resource

is very useful for those seeking women's place and insights in the sacred dramas. A thorough index and suggestions for prayer make this more than a good guide—indeed, a good companion.

Mairs, Nancy. **A DYNAMIC GOD: LIVING AN UNCONVENTIONAL CATHOLIC FAITH.** Boston: Beacon Press, 2007 (142 pages, \$23.95).

A popular writer of contemporary spirituality, Nancy Mairs describes what is increasingly conventional Catholic faith, namely, worship in small justice-oriented communities and appreciation of the Divine in all. She makes especially rich use of the Gospel of Luke, bringing the text alive with her deft prose.

McAvoy, Jane. **KITCHEN TALK: SHARING OUR STORIES OF FAITH.** St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2003 (149 pages, \$19.99).

An impressive group of women from the Disciples of Christ tell their stories in vivid and accessible accounts. Conclusion: kitchen tables are sacred spaces.

Polaski, Sandra Hack. **A FEMINIST INTRODUCTION TO PAUL.** St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005 (159 pages, \$19.99).

Some may wonder if "Paul" and "feminism" can be used positively in the same sentence. This study makes the case for how by engaging in critical reading of both the writer and his critics.

Schottrof, Luise, Silvia Schroer, and Marie-Theres Wacker, Editors. **FEMINIST INTERPRETATION: THE BIBLE IN WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVE.** Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998 (270 pages, \$22).

A comprehensive overview of feminist biblical interpretation, this volume is an important cornerstone for future work. It is astonishing to realize how long the Bible was read in kyriarchal terms, and how relatively short the feminist run has been, yet how productive and insightful.

Scott, Anne Firor, Editor. **PAULI MURRAY AND CAROLINE WARE: FORTY YEARS OF LETTERS IN BLACK AND WHITE.** Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006 (216 pages, \$24.95).

Fascinating women in their own right, Pauli Murray, a lawyer and the first African American Episcopal priest, and Caroline Ware, an historian and consumer advocate, develop a friendship during the 1950s and beyond. Selections of their letters compiled here reveal their personal and political struggles and the love that sustains.

Trible, Phyllis and Letty M. Russell, Editors. **HAGAR, SARAH, AND THEIR CHILDREN: JEWISH, CHRISTIAN, AND MUSLIM PERSPECTIVES.** Louisville: John Knox Press, 2006 (211 pages, \$24.95).

"Most contemporary studies of the three faiths keep the traditional focus on Abraham. But not this book. It focuses on Hagar, Sarah, and their children" (p. 1). So the editors and the various authors involved look anew at ancient texts with the well-being of the marginalized at the heart of their concerns. This is a solid grounding for feminist multi-religious work.

West, Traci C. **DISRUPTIVE CHRISTIAN ETHICS: WHEN RACISM AND WOMEN'S LIVES MATTER.** Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006 (216 pages, \$24.95).

This marvelous constructive project begins with Reinhold Niebuhr and ends with tomorrow's newspaper looking at the intersection of women's suffering and the reality of racism. Voices of real women dovetail well with helpful theoretical work. A must-read for those who value women's safety.

Yamaguchi, Satoko. **MARY & MARTHA: WOMEN IN THE WORLD OF JESUS.** Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002 (204 pages, \$24). (Eugene, OR: WIPF & Stock Publishers, 2006, \$25).

New insights into the Gospel of John from a Japanese feminist perspective give this book, now some years in print, a long and healthy life. Women's roles in scripture can be overlooked, trivialized, or ignored but come to life and light under optics like this one.

For Children

Van den Abeele, Veronique with illustrations by Claude K. Dubois. **STILL MY GRANDMA.** Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Books, 2007 (28 pages, \$16).

A little girl learns how to continue loving her grandmother who suffers from Alzheimer's disease. The heart wrenching story is beautifully told.



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Mary E. Hunt, Ph.D. and Diann L. Neu, D.Min., LGSW, cofounders and codirectors

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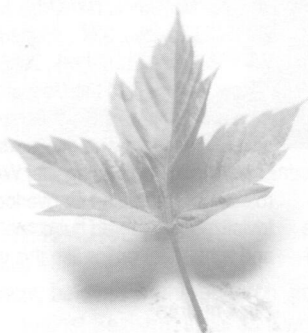
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"Birth, life, and death —
each took place on the
hidden side of a leaf."
Toni Morrison



Inside This Issue of **WATERwheel**

1/Women-Church Looks Forward and Back 2/Editorial 3/Introducing Anna Roeschley 3/In Memory of People of Wisdom
4/Liturgy: Eucharistic Banquet of Divine Wisdom 6/Refreshed by the Spirit 6/Women's Multi-Faith Groups 7/Resources