

water wheel

Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual • NEWSLETTER

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Cheers to a Wonderful Retreat!

Holy, Wholly Holy: Catholic Women's Routes to Holiness turned out to be just that, a time of delightful, spirited community. From June 13-15, 2014, WATER teamed up with



A contemplative scene from our retreat center. Photo credit: Mary Kaye Radtke.

Women of DignityUSA for a third joint retreat led by lesbian and queer women. Thirty-two women gathered for a wonderful weekend at the welcoming, comfortable Retreat and Conference Center at Bon Secours in Marriottsville, MD.

This year we focused on holiness, sainthood—our own and one another's—and how we live in integrated ways. The

weekend included prayer, quiet time, recreation, art work, celebration, and conversation. We explored the meaning of holiness for bodies and spirits who have been disparaged by the institutional Church, yet know the depths of holiness. We explored holiness as an essential part of being human, not something that only a few people achieve through heroic acts.

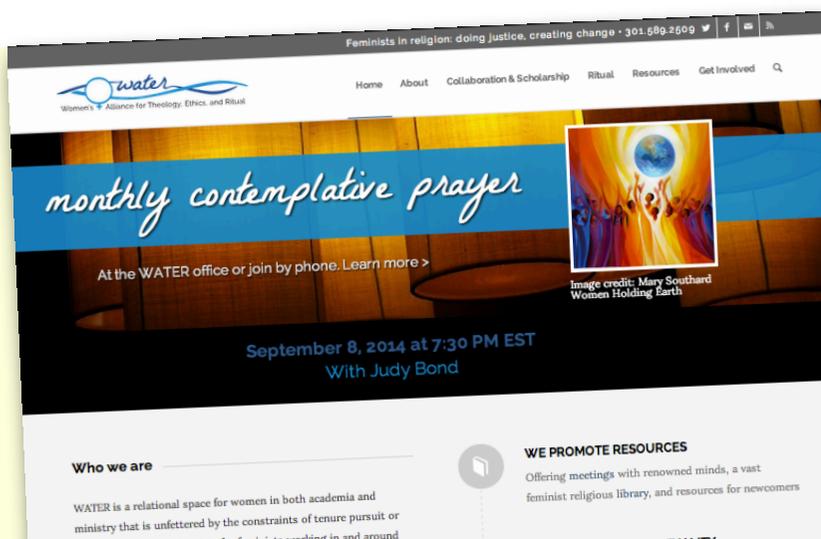
Highlights of the weekend included a panel of women sharing their insights into the topic. A ritual meal, Eucharist over dinner, was another popular moment. Everyone enjoyed the rooftop party with dancing and conversation, music and libations under the full moon. There are so many ways to embody holiness. We named people—living and dead—who fit the bill. We drew and molded clay as we thought about the challenges. We received lovely cards with images of saints of old. We grew in our ability to call ourselves holy, perhaps the toughest task of all. It was wholly holy. Thanks to all who came. Please stay in touch. For those interested in attending the next DignityWomen and WATER retreat let us know. Email waterstaff@hers.com.

WATER staff are happy to help you or your group design your retreat experience. Contact us at watersaff@hers.com. In the Baltimore/Washington, DC area, check out the Retreat and Conference Center at Bon Secours for a wonderful place to host your event (rccbonsecours.com). ■

Mary E. Hunt is co-founder and co-director of WATER.

We Got a Facelift!

Our interns have been hard at work overhauling WATER's website and newsletter, *WATERwheel*. They've done their best to make them more streamlined, easier to navigate, and more visually appealing. The website now features a beautiful slideshow that quickly connects our guests to the latest happenings, and straightforward access to our resources. We're at the same web address as always: waterwomensalliance.org. Come visit and see how we've changed and improved! We would also love your feedback.





In Memory of Her

Where does “in memory of her” come from? In Mark 14:9, Jesus said of the faithful woman who anointed him “and truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.” Church history conveniently forgot her name. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza rescued her spirit.

We remember our friends who have died in the past few months, especially Kaye Ashe OP, Janet Kalven, Peggy Cleveland, and Robert Nugent. Full tributes to their lives and work can be found on WATER’s website, waterwomensalliance.org.

Christian Feminism Today: Fortieth Anniversary Conference

WATER congratulates the Evangelical and Ecumenical Women’s Caucus — Christian Feminism Today (eewc.com) on forty years of inspiring, effective, and collaborative work. Their recent gathering, “Let Justice Roll On Like a River,” held in St. Louis, MO, brought together seventy-five women (and a few men) for a weekend of lectures, worship, fellowship, music, and strategizing.

The group began in the 1970s as part of the Evangelicals for Social Action. In 1986, when the women affirmed LGBT equality, they lost a number of members. But they gained many friends and supporters from both within and beyond evangelical circles.

This year’s meeting was a wonderful opportunity to see the talent and commitment of EEWC-CFT members, especially students who gave some of the most innovative presentations. Other members led workshops, sparked spirited singing, offered prayers, and created a program with plenty of room around the edges for conversation, the real stuff of feminist work.

Sharon Groves, Director of the Religion and Faith Program of the Human Rights Campaign, opened the meeting with insights into LGBT advocacy. Mary E. Hunt from WATER invited people to explore faith-based social justice. Writer Susan Campbell drew on evangelical experiences to encourage people to keep on struggling. Professors Melanie Springer Mock and Kendra Weddle Irons looked at evangelical popular culture for clues about women’s situations. Longtime EEWC-CFT leader Letha Scanzoni provided insights from the early days to the near future. A concert by the Troubadours of Divine Bliss (check them out! troubadoursofdivinebliss.com) added spirit and

festivity. It was a beautifully crafted weekend with a warm welcome to match.

Post Hobby Lobby, these feminists from various evangelical backgrounds are valuable allies in social justice work. They are deeply rooted in a faith tradition that needs their powerful work to distinguish it from those who would use it for oppression.

WATER considers EEWC-CFT a sister group in every sense of the word. We are honored to collaborate with them and we cheer them *ad multos annos!* — *Mary E. Hunt* ■

One More Year: Intern Cathy Jaskey Staying On for 2014-15

We are excited to announce that our Loretto Volunteer, Cathy Jaskey, will be joining us for another year. Cathy has become indispensable to us at WATER, and her giving spirit is a great addition to the community. We look forward to extra time with this remarkable woman.



Special Thanks



The WATER office is home to four lovely carpets thanks to Cynthia Schultz. She writes: “I am delighted to donate the Persian carpets to WATER. They are beautiful as is the work that Mary and Diann do.” Thank you, Cynthia! We welcome our friends to stop by and enjoy them!

Upcoming Programming

WATERtalks - September & October

Feminist Conversations in Religion Series

September 10, 1pm – 2pm EDT

“**Violence against Women of Color**” an hour-long teleconference with **Andrea Smith**.

October 8, 1pm – 2pm EDT

“**Bisexuality: Making the Invisible Visible in Faith Communities**” an hour-long teleconference with **Debra Haffner & Marie Alford-Harkey**.

For event registration and past audio, contact us at waterwomensalliance.org or waterstaff@hers.com.

Monthly Contemplative Prayer

September 8, 7:30pm with **Judy Bond**

Following date: October 6, 7:30pm

For event registration and past audio, contact us at waterwomensalliance.org or waterstaff@hers.com.

Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network

AAR/SBL Annual Meeting: Friday November 21, 4-6pm
Catalina Room, Marriott Marquis & Marina, San Diego, CA

The Network will discuss teaching that engages gender-based violence as feminist liberation theological praxis. Speakers include: **Solveig Anna Boasdottir**, University of Iceland; **Marie M. Fortune**, FaithTrust Institute; **Lisa Gelber**, The Jewish Theological Seminary; **Elizabeth Siwo-Okundi**, Boston University School of Theology; **Traci West**, Drew University Theological School. Discussion and strategizing will follow their short presentations. All are welcome.

RSVP to coordinators: **Mary E. Hunt**, WATER, 310 589 2509, mhunt@her.com • **Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza**, Harvard Divinity School, eschussler@hds.harvard.edu.

Summer Ritual: Hand in Hand

Summer hands have a freedom of their own. Look at your hands. Clasp them together. Through the centuries, the creative and healing power of the Divine has been represented through gestures of the human hand.

Bless Your Hands

Think of the lives your hands have touched and the incredible work you have done.

Blessed be these hands, when they nurture creativity and cradle new life.

Blessed be these hands, when they care for Earth, recycle, and grow gardens.

Bless Your Friends' Hands

Remember the many ways you and your friends join hands together.

Blessed be these hands, when they embrace with love, respect, and dignity.

Blessed be these hands, when they comfort a loved one living with pain-filled uncertainties.

Bless the Hands of Justice

Think of those whose hands bring about change.

Blessed be these hands, when they stop violence and bring about social change.

Blessed be these hands, when they care for the aged, the infirm, the lonely, the desperate.

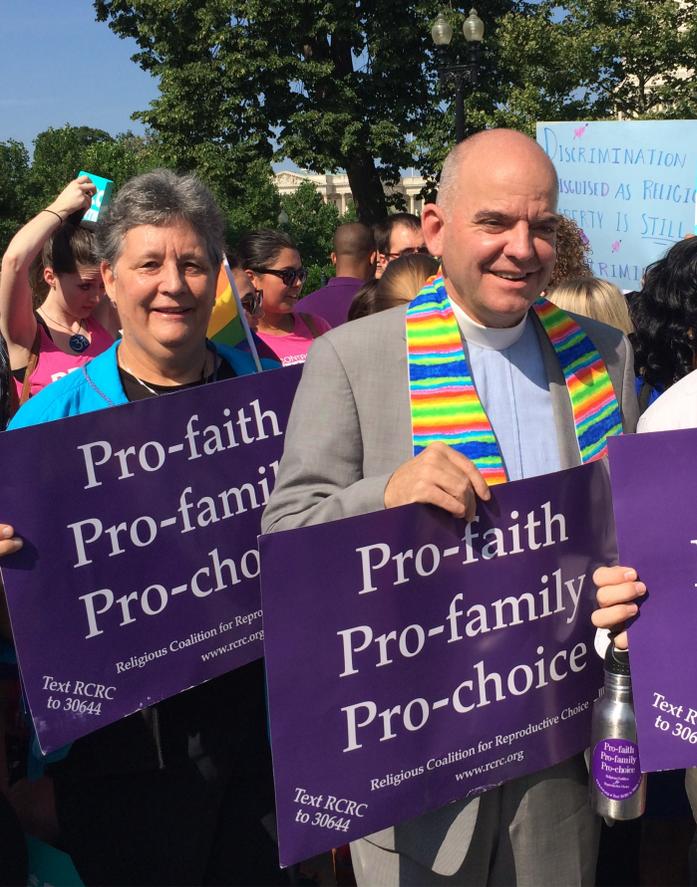
Take Action with Your Hands

- Pick flowers and give a bouquet to a friend.
- Pull weeds, compost, and beautify your yard.
- Hug a child and say, “I love you.”
- Go swimming and feel the refreshing water.
- Make a special dinner for your family or friends.
- Volunteer at a food pantry.
- Honor the holy within your hands.

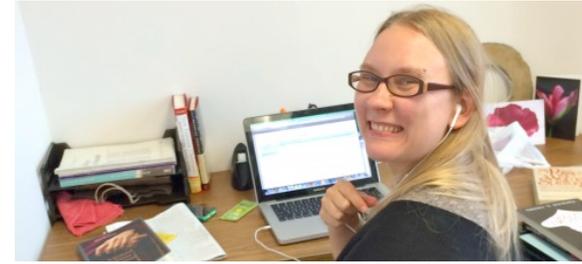
Blessed be!

© Diann L. Neu is co-founder and co-director of WATER.





Left Advocating on the steps of the Supreme Court during the Hobby Lobby ruling: Mary E. Hunt and our friend from Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, Rev. Harry Knox. **Top** Our current interns left to right: Cathy Jaskey (Loretto Volunteer Program), Melody Stanford (Boston U School of Theology, '16), Ciara Chivers (Tufts, '14), Jacqueline Small (Princeton Seminary, '16) **Top right** Former intern Michelle Mueller spent a week with us working on her doctoral comp essays for the GTU. **Right** An altar setting from our "Holy" retreat.



Looking for New Ways to Give? We Could Use Your Support

WATER needs your help to keep our organization flowing! As a non-profit, we rely on the generous donations of people like you to sustain our work: producing feminist rituals and scholarship, maintaining our library, hosting events like the Catholic women's "Holy, Wholly Holy" retreat, and cultivating an environment where young scholars and activists can form connections and deepen understanding. Given the recent news about the Hobby Lobby decision, and the dismissive attitudes many religious leaders continue to take towards women, we need your support more than ever. If you have benefited from our resources, and have the means to give, please donate to WATER today using the enclosed envelope or online at waterwomensalliance.org.



Please stay in touch
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Who We Are

WATER is a global network, an educational and spiritual space, a center for dialogue on feminism, faith, and justice. We connect activists, religious leaders, students, scholars, and allies who are using feminist religious values to create social change. Founded in 1983 by Mary E. Hunt and Diann L. Neu, we have been empowering women to address structural violence for over thirty years — making WATER one of the oldest feminist religious non-profit organizations in the world. The WATER community needs you to work toward inclusive theologies and rituals, to push for social change, and to collaborate across many differences. Join us! **To learn more about what we do, visit waterwomensalliance.org.**