



water wheel

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

Editorial

Beijing '95 promises to be a powerful event. The UN Fourth World Conference on Women and the Non-Governmental Organizations' Forum to be held in late August-early September 1995 will focus the world's attention on the needs and aspirations of women. This time, grassroots organizing seems to be working well, with hundreds of local gatherings around the world pooling input for both national representatives to the UN and myriad NGO folks who will converge on China for the workings and festivities.

Many religious feminists will be there building networks and learning from one another. A Goddess or two will surely grace the proceedings. Of course most of us will not be in China. But we can all make our voices heard through regional meetings, e-mail conferences, events at home during the conference time, and connection with groups like the Women-Church Convergence which plan a presence there.

It is not often that the world press turns to women, but in those late August days what better time to chat with your local religion writer, suggest a radio talk show theme, even invite some friends over to ponder "the big questions" and how they affect your community. 'Tis a great time to measure just how far we've come since the forward looking strategies of the last meeting, just how deep and wide our infra-structures have grown.

When the final document is published and the last booth dismantled in Beijing, literally millions of women from every country in the world will have been involved somehow. That's progress, with hundreds of millions more to go.



Just Stop It

by Mary E. Hunt

People magazine with Susan Smith on the cover and the glaring headline "Does She Deserve to Die?" jumped off the stand and into my hands in the grocery check-out line. That same evening, New York became the 38th state to legalize the killing of killers. My visceral reaction to it all, that pit of the stomach sense that something is hideously wrong with this picture, quickly gave way to the realization that few feminists in religion have offered any analysis on the question. My position is simple: just stop it.

The perplexing matter is why there is not a raging debate on the death penalty in the United States, a la abortion, with religious leaders arrayed across the spectrum. In fact, there are religious coalitions that deal with the issue, and always a few stalwarts who protest to the 11th hour in front of places where this heinous procedure is carried out. Where are the rest of us?

I write to open debate among religious feminists, and to encourage concerted action to end the practice once and for all. Not to overreact, but in the present climate this could turn out to

with 300 people waiting around to die by state decree. In the current political climate I expect more states to go the way of New York, and even more to follow Texas. Knee jerk reaction that says "Kill the criminal" is increasingly common. I would be first to admit there are crimes so unspeakable it is hard to imagine justice. But I am absolutely certain more killing is not justice.

The silence on the death penalty, the low priority it gets on most social justice agendas, reveals deep ambivalence among religious feminists about violence. We want to stop it, but we don't want to act violently to make that happen. We want rapists punished, stalkers outlawed, and murderers incapacitated, but I have never heard a feminist case for the death penalty. Nor have I heard one against it. Let's start building one.

Feminism is about women's well being. But moreso, it is about changes needed in a society in which those who are disadvantaged in every way--especially racially, sexually and economically--are given priority attention until structured differences are eradicated. Those who make it

The basic fact about the death penalty is that it does not work.

be a place where equal opportunity and affirmative action look good to people who oppose it everywhere else. Women dying by lethal injection is not my idea of equality.

Susan Smith, who admitted to strapping her children into their car seats and letting the car roll into a lake, is an unlikely candidate for the death penalty. Most who die are poor, male and from so-called minority racial-ethnic groups. Yet the public outcry over her desperate actions, including her racist effort to pin her crime on an unknown African American man, was such that she could indeed be "offed" as an example. It seems there are no good mothers anymore--whether Marsha Clark overworking or women who receive AFDC payments underworking--so why should Susan Smith expect "extenuating circumstances" to save her?

In 1994 more than 3000 people sat on death row; 31 were executed. Texas leads the way

to the gas chamber are usually drawn from the lowest rungs of a viciously hierarchical society. An appalling number of the condemned have very limited mental functioning, despite the courts' efforts to disallow such executions.

The basic fact about the death penalty is that it does not work. People die, all right, but the benefit which is purported to accrue from state-authorized murder is that this deters others. Not. While generally crime rates are dropping, the greater problem is that more crimes are committed with guns so results are more devastating. Likewise, while numbers are down in most major cities, young African American males run the most serious risk of injury and death. Could racism account for the lack of public feminist voice on the issue? Probably, among other factors, but let's admit it and rectify it by stopping the killings.

(continued on next page)

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WATER is a feminist educational center, a network of justice-seeking people that began in 1983 as a response to the need for serious theological, ethical and liturgical development for and by women. We work locally, nationally and internationally doing programs, projects, publications, workshops, retreats, counseling and liturgical planning which have helped thousands of people to be a part of an inclusive church and society.

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No need to give WATERwheel away, cut it up, copy it or forego sharing. If you know someone with whom you'd particularly like to share this issue, just send us her or his name and address and we'll mail a complimentary copy direct. Better yet, send us a list of friends and relatives you'd like to acquaint with WATER, and we'll introduce ourselves.

If you or some you know would like to receive WATERwheel on tape, we will be happy to arrange for audio transcription of the issue(s) you desire. Contact WATER, 301-589-2509. Cassettes will be made by Volunteers for the Visually Handicapped at a cost of \$10 per tape.

Stop *(continued from page 1)*

Money plays a surreal role in the discussion of the death penalty. Most of the three quarters of the U.S. population that favor state sanctioned killing see it as an efficient, economical solution to a dirty, distasteful problem. In fact, it is a disgraceful waste of money. A 1993 Duke University study showed that North Carolina paid at least \$2 million more to execute each person killed than it would have cost to keep each in prison for life. New Yorkers estimate their new law will cost close to \$118 million a year. Skeptics may shake their heads, but between costly appeals, the actual apparatus of the killings and the like, it is a pricey way to make a point. Money would better be spent on drug rehabilitation, education programs, virtually anything that actually deters crime, something the death penalty has never been shown to accomplish.

Some who oppose capital punishment make a lot of the fact that innocent people get killed when the death penalty is in place. Their opponents, however, agree it happens, but dispute how often, as if more than one, or more than a hundred, would make a difference. Perhaps. But I am not sure what it means to say that someone is innocent and another guilty when it comes to taking their lives. Of course their guilt or innocence with regard to the crime involved may differ, but that is not really at play here. What is in the balance is whether they can afford the kind of legal help which will keep them off death row to begin with, crime notwithstanding, in short, whether they are guilty or innocent of having the means to stay alive. The rest is detail.

There comes a time when we have to take a hard look at a soft fact: the human person.

There is always the question of how death occurs. But this, too, seems lost in the details. We have "progressed" from the days when local communities kept matters in their own hands, with people strung up, lynched as it were, all in the name of keeping good order. The electric chair came next, but when stories got out about how "inefficient" it was, the gas chamber came into vogue. That proved leaky at times, with those being killed subjected to "cruel and unusual punishment" in the process. Again, the devil is in the details. Dead is dead.

Ronald Reagan, during his California governorship and drawing on his long years as a horseman, supported lethal injection. He argued that a horse is put to sleep and replaced by another one, so why not follow this seemingly more genteel route with people? Horses, after all, are only killed when they are very ill. We need the ecofeminists for animal rights on this human case as well. Feminist doctors might lead the way on the use of their professional skills to accomplish this deadly goal. What if doctors would

not cooperate?

There comes a time when we have to take a hard look at a soft fact: the human person. It is not a fetus nor an animal, both of which deserve a hard look too, and a great deal of respect, but are the proper subject of another article. It is finally a human being who is being killed with tax dollars; that is simply unacceptable to me.

Maybe killing killers is kinder than letting them wither in prison, but that is not the only alternative either. The death penalty shines a light on the prisons, and reveals an ugly scene. But the picture of someone leaving feet first on a gurney after the death penalty has been administered simply takes that ugliness to a new depth. We can do better.

Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun summed up his decades of work on the issue by remarking toward the end of his career, "It seems that the decision whether a human being should live or die is so inherently subjective, rife with all of life's understandings, experiences, prejudices and passions, that it inevitably defies the rationality and consistency required by the Constitution..."

Justice Lewis Powell moved to a similar position in recent years. Both men voted in favor of keeping the death penalty in earlier stages of their judicial careers, but had the courage and insight to change their minds.

Whole countries, notably England, have done the same thing as recently as the 1960's. So what does it take to make the case? Perhaps just saying killing another person is wrong.

Creative solutions to criminal behavior, especially the first degree murders which are the usual stuff of death penalty debates, are slow at

best. But we can stop the legal killing, and that is a start. In fact, Camille D'Arienzo, a Mercy Sister (263 Willoughby Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11205-1487), has drawn up a "Declaration of Life." Like a living will, one can sign it to say that if murdered one does not want the murderer executed "no matter how heinous the crime or how much I may have suffered." It has no legal standing, but could influence a sentencing judge. It is a start, and if it will save Susan Smith and others I'll sign. Will you?

Study Questions

1. What is your position on the death penalty?
2. What can your local group do to express its opinion publicly?
3. What are your suggestions for ways to move beyond the rhetoric toward just alternatives to the death penalty?

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

Bad Boll: More Than Just a Pretty Name

by Mary E. Hunt

Christian lesbians gather yearly at the Protestant Academy at Bad Boll, Germany for a week-end of networking, education, socializing and strategizing. The 1994 meeting featured a full house of 260 women from fifteen countries on five continents, with another sixty women turned away for lack of space. Diann Neu and I had the privilege of attending as guests since I had lectured at a previous such conference and since WATER is supportive of this work.

The theme was "Lesbian Politics--Just a Lifestyle?" As usual, you really had to be there to get the full flavor, but a few images will extend the high energy and brilliant organization, the insightful content and wonderful fun to yet another circle as "Bad Boll" becomes synonymous with inclusivity and substantive progress on issues about which churches have too long dithered.

The Academy is in a small town outside Stuttgart where the other major "industry," besides this high-powered conference center with a commitment to social change, is thermal baths at which Germans "take the cure." This is no small attraction after a long day of meetings.

The real energy of the gathering was generated simply by being together from around the world, especially from South Africa, Jamaica, the Philippines, Hong Kong, India, as well as all over Europe, including women from the former East Germany. It was painful to hear the horrendous treatment that many women receive in churches alleged to be about love and justice. But it was comforting to see the same clarity of purpose and sense of expectation that things ought to be different that we in the U.S. have brought to so many Christian denominations here despite their homo-hating antics.

The backlash we are experiencing in the U.S. is far from an isolated phenomenon. What is different, however, is that in some countries repression is so strong lesbians do not "dare to speak love's name" and expect to stay within a faith tradition. But reaction to this is similar around the world in that lesbians seem ever more creative, ready to make do and make new when necessary. Likewise, there are many lesbian women pastors at risk of losing jobs and reputations, but they persist.

Conference organizers, including Dr. Herta Leistner, Dr. Monika Barz and Dr. Irmgard Ehlers, were no strangers to controversy, nor to integrity. These three have been pioneers in the Christian lesbian movement in Germany which, amazingly enough, is funded in part by church money which is, after all, tax money. That they are able to swim against the tide of ecclesial conservatism and use church resources to bring women from so-called developing countries to this meeting is testimony to their skills. I was

impressed by their attention to detail, boundless hospitality, and seemingly effortless public leadership, poise and humor. This is a new generation of lesbian church bureaucrats who are out of the closet, unlike predecessors who were supportive from behind the scenes. They are colleagues and role models for women all over the world, and they pay a significant price for their work.

U.S. ethicist and activist Janice Raymond gave the keynote address. She called lesbian politics not a lifestyle but a life. She urged lesbians to challenge the hetero-mainstream to adopt feminist values in all aspects of life, not simply with regard to sexual practices but also in terms of consumption, commitment and human rights. Some participants took issue with Dr. Raymond, especially on issues related to sexual practice, where she rejected s+m, for example, as unfeminist. But the general consensus revolved around the need to reflect critically on our lives, something we did with gusto all weekend and celebrated in liturgies and art.

Panels of participants described the lives of lesbians in the various countries represented, as well as their activities in their respective churches. Workshops ranged from lesbian family planning (i.e., auto-insemination and its legal, medical and social consequences) to mothering, from dance to drumming, from coming out on the job to dealing with the differences among us on sexual desires.

The most evocative discussion was one bringing together two official observers representing the World Council of Churches with a staff member for ecumenical relations of the Metropolitan Community Church, a new observer at WCC meetings. The very presence of the MCC, and the courageous activism on the part of other denominational representatives, is leading the WCC to take seriously the reality of gay/lesbian/bisexual and transgendered people in its midst, as well as in its member churches all over the world. It was impressive to see the level of frankness without rancor, challenge without viciousness, as the three women, under the skillful guidance of Herta Leistner, carried on a mature if difficult conversation. I fully expect there will be nothing but positive results from it. In the long run, albeit many years from now, I predict that the discussion at Bad Boll will be pointed to as an important one that moved the international conversation forward. I doubt sincerely if a group of men could have been so respectful in their differences and all emerge with their integrity intact.

Bad Boll is a safe place for German Christian lesbian women, at least one weekend a year. They shared it generously with the rest of us, offering a warm welcome and a festive farewell,

concluding with a moving liturgy adapted from one of Diann's.

The next lesbian meeting at Bad Boll is scheduled for December 14-17, 1995. I don't know if it will be international again, or if the German women will decide to regroup and reassess themselves in the face of this year's challenges. Either would be understandable, but whichever way they go, the international Christian lesbian movement has taken a huge step forward with style.

I look forward to a day when such a meeting can gather lesbian women from a range of faith traditions, each invited to articulate her own, just as each nationality was taken seriously on its own terms at Bad Boll. Events like this make me think that such a dream can come true.



Glory Be to Artists

Aspiring to please the eye as well as the mind, WATERwheel is always on the lookout for evocative graphics with crisp, clean lines. And we'd like to give credit to the artists whose work we use to brighten these pages.

Alas, too often women don't sign their artistic creations, so we can't identify them. Double alas, we often don't have time or opportunity to track them down. As a nonprofit on a shoestring, we will be glad to acknowledge any artwork we use with a credit line and five free copies of the WATERwheel in which it appears.

With deep if belatedly expressed appreciation, we wish to identify these two artists whose work appeared uncredited in the Winter 1994 issue:

Eunice Cudzewicz, Medical Mission Sisters, design from *Tales of the Heart: Affective Approaches to Global Education* reprinted with permission of the Office of Global Education, WSW, NCC, to illustrate the liturgy "Liberating Love for Justice;"

Mary O'Herron, design reprinted with permission of The Religious Formation Conference to illustrate the article "Fall Frenzy."

Think Green:

by Diann L. Neu

Ritual Occasion

April 22, Earth Day, or any time that calls you and yours to cherish the planet.

Preparation

Celebrate this liturgy outside, or in a room with many windows. Spread an earth colored cloth in the center of the circle; on and around it place symbols from the earth, i.e. a bowl of soil, rocks, flowers, leaves, a bowl of water, a loaf of bread, glasses of juice and wine, a basket of nuts and fruits, and a world globe. Duplicate, cut separately and pass around the group the quotes that participants will read during the "Thoughts of Green" section.

Call to Prayer

Welcome to our celebration of Earth Day. The earth is a sacred space of ever-greening life. Trees, springs, mountains, flowers, animals and humans live on her and call her home. This planet needs our respect and care. She is our sister/mother/friend/companion who stuns us with beauty and life-giving power.

Name the Circle

Let us take time to create our community and unite ourselves with all of creation. Take the globe, speak your name, say what you are thinking about this Earth Day, and pass the globe to the person on your left. (When the globe returns to the person who first passed it, s/he places it in the center of the circle.)

Prayer of Creation

Let us pray the Chinook Blessing Litany, alternating sides (from **Earth Prayers**, edited by Roberts and Amidon):

Side One: We call upon our planet home, with its beautiful depths and soaring heights, its vitality and abundance of life, and together we ask that it...

All: Teach us, and show us the way.

Side Two: We call upon the mountains, the Cascades and the Olympics, the high green valleys and meadows filled with flowers, the snows that never melt, the summits of intense silence, and we ask that they...

All: Teach us and show us the way.

One: We call upon the waters that rim the earth, horizon to horizon, that flow in our rivers and streams, that fall upon our gardens and fields, and we ask that they...

All: Teach us and show us the way.



Two: We call upon the land which grows our food, the nurturing soil, the fertile fields, the abundant gardens and orchards, and we ask that they...

All: Teach us and show us the way.

One: We call upon the forests, the great trees reaching strongly to the sky with earth in their roots and the heavens in their branches, the fir and the pine and the cedar, and we ask them to...

All: Teach us, and show us the way.

Two: We call upon the creatures of the fields and forests and seas, our brothers and sisters the wolves and deer, the eagle and dove, the great whales and the dolphin, the beautiful orca and salmon who share our earth-home, and we ask them to...

All: Teach us, and show us the way.

One: We call upon all those who have lived on this earth, our ancestors and our friends, who dreamed the best for future generations, and upon whose lives our lives are built, and with thanksgiving, we call upon them to...

All: Teach us, and show us the way.

Two: And lastly, we call upon all that we hold most sacred, the presence and power of the Great Spirit of love and truth which flows through all the universe...to be with us to:

All: Teach us, and show us the way.

Touch The Earth

Choose one of the earth symbols from the center of the circle, take it in your hands carefully, honor it. Let us collectively dance around the circle using a stepping pattern of right foot step right, left foot close, while singing:

Song: "We Walk this Earth Together" from **Fire Prayer** by Danean, c 1989 Sacred Music/Variena Music.

As one we walk this earth together.
As one we sing to her our song.
As one we love her, as one we heal her,
Her heart beats with our own as one.

As one we join with her, our mother,
As one we feel her sacred song.
As one we touch her, as one we heal her,
Her heart beats with our own as one.

Thoughts of Green

(Participants read the quotes. After each four, everyone chants.)

"I shall remind you of the works of God, and tell you what I have seen... Who could ever grow tired of gazing on God's glory?"

from **Sirach** 42: 15, 25

"To think green is nothing less than to heal the human spirit and completely reallocate our resources and priorities. We need nothing less if we are to survive and flourish in the twenty-first century."

from Petra Kelly, **Thinking Green!**

"We are now at the threshold of a second major shift in theological reflection during this century, a shift in which the main issue will be not only how we can change the world but how we can save it from deterioration and its species from extinction."

from Sallie McPague, "An Earthly Theological Agenda," in **Ecofeminism and the Sacred** edited by Carol Adams

"There is only one path to survival and liberation for nature, women, and men, and that is the ecological path to harmony, sustainability, and diversity."

from Vandana Shiva, in **Thinking Green!** by Petra Kelly

Chant: "The Earth, the Air, the Fire, the Water Source Unknown, from **A Circle Is Cast** by Libana, c 1986.

The Earth, the Air, the Fire, the Water
Return, return, return, return
The Earth, the Air, the Fire, the Water
Return, return, return, return, return.

"Is this not a precious home for us Earthlings? Is this not worth our love? Does it not deserve all the inventiveness and courage and generosity of which we are capable to preserve it from degradation and destruction and, by doing so, to secure our own survival?"

from Barbara Ward and Rene Dubos, **Only One Earth: The Care and Maintenance of a Small Planet**

"Breaking the spirit of nature today through rape and violence done to the earth, and breaking the spirit of nineteenth-century slave women

Hope for Planet Earth

through rape and violence, constitute crimes against nature and against the human spirit... This defilement of nature's body and of black women's bodies is sin, since its occurrence denies that black women and nature are made in the image of God. Its occurrence is an assault upon the spirit of creation in women and nature."

from Delores Williams, "Sin, Nature, and Black Women's Bodies," in *Ecofeminism and the Sacred* edited by Carol Adams

"Is it not remarkable how we manage to live our lives in apparent normality, while, at every moment, human civilization and the existence of all forms of life on our planet are threatened with sudden annihilation? We seem to accept this situation calmly, as if it were to be expected... But soothing our anxiety by ignoring the constant danger of annihilation will not lessen the danger."

from Helen Caldicott, *Nuclear Madness: What You Can Do!*

"This earth is my sister, I love her daily grace, her silent daring, and how loved I am, how we admire this strength in each other, all that we have lost, all that we have suffered, all that we know, we are stunned by this beauty, and I do not forget: what she is to me, what I am to her."

from Susan Griffin, *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her*

Chant: The Earth, the Air, the Fire, the Water
Return, return, return, return
The Earth, the Air, the Fire, the Water
Return, return, return, return, return.

"There are people who think that only people have emotions like pride, fear, and joy, but those who know will tell you all things are alive, perhaps not in the same way we are alive, but each in its own way, as should be, for we are not all the same. And though different from us in shape and life span, different in Time and Knowing, yet are trees alive. And rocks. And water. And all know emotion."

from Anne Cameron, *Daughters of Copper Woman*

"Glance at the sun. See the moon and the stars. Gaze at the beauty of earth's greeting. Now, think.

What delight God gives to humankind with all these things ..."

from Hildegard of Bingen, *Meditations with Hildegard of Bingen*, edited by Gabrielle Uhlein

"But for those not yet touched by the disease and certainly for the generations as yet unborn, prevention is the imperative need."

from Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*

"Our thoughts must be on how to restore to the Earth its dignity as a living being; how to stop raping and plundering it as a matter of course. We must begin to develop the consciousness that everything has equal rights because existence itself is equal. In other words, we are all here: trees, people, snakes, alike. ...[B]eyond feeding and clothing and sheltering ourselves, even abundantly, we should be allowed to destroy only what we ourselves can re-create. We cannot re-create this world. We cannot re-create 'wilderness.' We cannot even, truly, re-create ourselves. Only our behavior can we re-create, or create anew."

from Alice Walker, "Everything Is a Human Being," *Living by the Word*

Chant: The Earth, the Air, the Fire, the Water
Return, return, return, return
The Earth, the Air, the Fire, the Water
Return, return, return, return, return.

Reflect Together

How do you experience an interconnection with the pain and the power of creation? Let us reflect silently for a few moments. *(Pause)*

Call to Partnership with All Relations

from Joanna Macy in *Earth Prayers*

We hear you, fellow-creatures. We know we are wrecking the world and we are afraid. Don't leave us alone, we need your help. You need us too for your own survival. Are there powers you can share with us?

"I, lichen, work slowly, very slowly. Time is my friend. This is what I give you: patience for the long haul and perseverance."

"It is a dark time. As deep-diving trout I offer you my fearlessness of the dark."

"I, lion, give you my roar, the voice to speak out and be heard."

"I am caterpillar. The leaves I eat taste bitter now. What I offer you, humans, is my willingness to dissolve and transform... without knowing what the end-result will be, so I share with you my courage too."

Reflect Together

What green powers can you share to restore the earth's dignity and help the planet survive? Let us share our reflections. *(Sharing)*

Blessing of the Fruits of the Earth

Creation shares power by giving us daily food. *(The blesser takes the basket of fruits, nuts, bread, juice and wine.)* Extend your hands, palms up, and let us bless these fruits of the earth together.

Blessed are you, Source of Nourishment, for creating these fruits of the earth and sharing manna with your people as they wandered in the desert. Air, fire, water, earth and spirit combined to make this food. Numberless beings have died and labored that we may eat. Nourish us with the power of creation that we may nourish life. *(The blesser passes the basket around for all to take and eat.)*

Chant: "O Great Spirit," Traditional Native American

O Great Spirit, earth, air, fire and sea
You are around and all inside me.

Sending Forth

I who am the source of all life, I send you forth to manifest life for all the earth.

Blessed be life. Please echo this after me.
(Echo) Blessed be life.

I who am the beauty of all life, I send you forth to manifest beauty for all the earth.

Blessed be beauty. *(Echo)*

I who am the power of all life, I send you forth to manifest power for all the earth.

Blessed be power. *(Echo)*

I who am the truth of all life, I send you forth to manifest truth for all the earth.

Blessed be truth. *(Echo)*

I who am the energy of all life, I send you forth to manifest energy for all the earth.

Blessed be energy. *(Echo)*

I who am... Tell us and we will respond.

Greeting of Peace

Let us seal this commitment by sharing the peace of creation with one another.

Diann L. Neu, M.Div., LGSW, feminist liturgist and therapist, is co-director of WATER.



Take Our Daughters to Work - Yes!

Mark your calendar today so you don't forget: Thursday, April 27, is the date to take your young daughter--or someone else's if you don't have such a treasure in residence--to work with you.

Sponsored by the Ms. Foundation, this event is now in its third incarnation. Last year 25 million adults reportedly participated through their companies or organizations. This year the foundation has added a national organizer to help make the program more inclusive, reaching out to girls of color, young lesbians and girls with disabilities. For more information and help with planning your "role model work day," call 1-800-676-7780.



In Memory of Her

From WATER and the Women-Church Convergence:

In memory of **Connie Murray**, friend, colleague, sister, justice-seeker. We have known a valiant woman.

From Mary E. Hunt:

In memory of **John Boswell**, historian and colleague. The legacy of his scholarship and his commitment to justice for lesbian and gay people will endure for generations.

From Diann Neu, Mary E. Hunt and the SAS liturgy group:

In memory of **Sally Coston**, mother of Carol Coston, a woman who gave her daughter and many other children a great start in life through the child care center she founded. May she rest in eternal serenity.

From WATER:

In gratitude for **Kevin Calegari**, former president of Dignity USA, theological student, courageous champion of lesbian/gay people. May you rest in the peace of work well done.

From Maureen Donohue, Wayne NJ:

In memory of **Mary Ellen Tosi**, woman of incredible strength and courage. Your generous spirit was gift to so many who will never forget you. Bless you, our sister.

From Brigit Patricia McCallum, Shelburne Falls, MA:

In memory of my mom **Margaret McCallum** (1913-1994). May she come now to know herself as the daughter of a benevolent universe.

E-Notes on the WATERfront

by Carol Murdock Scinto

When Mary Hunt dons her cybersuit and boots up for e-mail delivery, even those of us who are computer-challenged or cursorily-impaired hum along. The WATER office now pulses with electronic connection.

E-mail messages in recent weeks have ranged the earth, encompassing topics from arcane (anybody have information about a mutiny on the Norwegian vessel SS Berensfiord immediately after World War II?) to audacious (who's mind-ing the kids in Newt America?).

There have been interchanges regarding planning for the UN Fourth World Conference on Women, set for Beijing in September, the complete text of the Declaration of Indigenous Peoples of the Western Hemisphere Regarding the Human Genome Diversity Project; a pithy analysis from *South of the Garden* (newsletter of the Resource Center for Women and Ministry in the South) of House Speaker Gingrich's much-discussed yet seldom spelled out Contract with (Whose?) America; and advance notice of the first European Women's Synod scheduled for July 1996 in Gmunden, Austria, to give women of that continent an opportunity to meet, interact with and empower one another.

Mary's weekly Updates to the WATERnet have included a timely reminder to save the dates November 10-12, 1995 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Women's Ordination Conference. Gathering at Crystal City, VA, as a "Discipleship of Equals: Breaking Bread/Doing Justice," WOC promises to reshape the whole debate. In Mary's e-words, "Instead of begging for ordination, we are declaring radical equality. Good move."

Other items of note from Mary's recent cyberscripts:

Regarding pedophile priests in the headlines, "Why does anyone think this will end without fundamental changes in structures, ideas about power and strict accountability for professional behavior?"

Welcoming a return special visitor to the WATER office, "Sr. Mary John Mananzan of GABRIELA and women's studies in the Philippines, author/editor of a number of books in feminist theology, is in NYC at Union Theological Seminary for several months."

Noting special date March 8, "Wish people a Happy International Women's Day and eventually it will sound like Happy New Year."

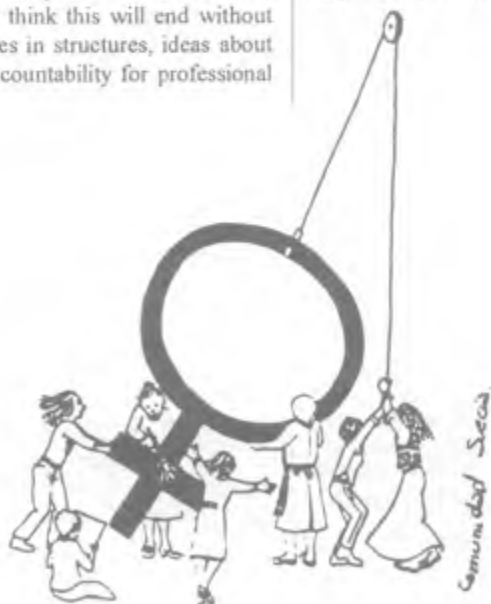
And passing along this message from Ann McKean: "Mary: I am going to Beijing and I intend to focus on the manner in which religions (worldwide) are used to support the oppression of women." Ann would like to hear from any others going to the conference who are interested in this aspect.

More than 110 ports on the WATERnet share such updates, action alerts and valuable information not otherwise readily known or available. You, too, can join the crew, if you have a computer, a modem and a questing spirit (plus an e-mail address).

True, even the pros are encountering occasional tie-ups as traffic multiplies on our new high speed highway to--oops, did I miss the off-ramp? Bear with us as WATER further refines its electronic discourse and clears up a few technical glitches, such as the recent one that repeated the same message a zillion times and drove everyone crazy. Help our co-cyberonauts remember which key to press to keep correspondence in the right channel instead of scattered to the four winds.

Now, if Diann Neu would please create a liturgy for the electronically short-circuited...

Carol Scinto (a.k.a. carolbly@aol.com) is a devoted WATER volunteer but, at 69, only partially wired for the 21st century.



Resources

Bolen, Jean Shindola. **CROSSING TO AVALON: A WOMAN'S MIDLIFE PILGRIMAGE.** San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994 (256 pages, \$22).

The heavy reliance on mythology adds an unwanted layer between the reader and the writer, but the story underneath is gripping and insightful.

Davidman, Lynn. **TRADITION IN A ROOTLESS WORLD: WOMEN TURN TO ORTHODOX JUDAISM.** Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991 (254 pages, \$13).

Ethnographic research on two women, one joining an Orthodox synagogue in a major city and one undergoing training at a Lubavitch study center, raises the critical questions of why religion, why this kind of religion, and why more liberal approaches are found wanting. A disquieting read, but important.

DeMarinis, Valerie M. **CRITICAL CARING: A FEMINIST MODEL OF PASTORAL PSYCHOLOGY.** Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993 (159 pages, \$22).

Technical but intriguing with readable case studies. Professionals in the field will have to judge usefulness, but a good start.

Donovan, Josephine. **FEMINIST THEORY: THE INTELLECTUAL TRADITIONS OF AMERICAN FEMINISM.** New York: Continuum (272 pages, \$14.95).

This reissue is well worth reading, even a second time, for a strong, clear, challenging history of feminist theory.

Kinukawa, Hisako. **WOMEN AND JESUS IN MARK: A JAPANESE FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE.** Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994 (156 pages, \$16.95).

This Japanese feminist reading of scripture provides a useful corrective to Western feminist bias and a window into Japanese women's experience.

Kretzer, David I. **SACRIFICED FOR HONOR: ITALIAN INFANT ABANDONMENT AND THE POLITICS OF REPRODUCTIVE CONTROL.** Boston: Beacon Press, 1993 (252 pages, \$25).

The same control issues which fuel the contemporary abortion battle were operative in 19th century Italy. A shocking read, but one which makes "perfect" sense given hierarchical Catholic thinking about women and our bodies.

Lernoux, Penny. **HEARTS ON FIRE: THE STORY OF THE MARYKNOLL SISTERS.**

Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993 (290 pages, \$22.95).

A moving history of great and good women who changed the face of the world through their courage and generosity. Rarely in this age does one encounter such spirited life.

Panzanno, Connie. **THE ME IN THE MIRROR.** Seattle, WA: Seal Press, 1994, (220 pages, \$12.95).

A remarkable story well told about a woman who embodies the disability rights movement in every fiber of her rich and complex being.

Raymond, Janice G. **THE TRANSEXUAL EMPIRE: THE MAKING OF THE SHE-MALE.** New York: Teachers College Press, 1994 (1979) (264 pages, \$17.95).

Reissued after fifteen years, this analysis is as fresh as the day it was written, with a new introduction which extends the analysis to transgender. Well worth pondering.

Segrest, Mab. **MEMOIR OF A RACE TRAITOR.** Boston: South End Press, 1994 (275 pages, \$15).

A white lesbian explores her southern roots, her racist family, the racist, homophobic but all too real context in which she works as an activist. Painful but persuasive.

Stevens, Maryanne, editor. **RECONSTRUCTING THE CHRIST SYMBOL: ESSAYS IN FEMINIST CHRISTOLOGY.** Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1993 (151 pages, \$9.95).

Useful treatments of old and renewed Christologies by Rosemary Radford Ruether, Jacquelyn Grant, Marina Herrera, Rita Nakashima Brock, Elizabeth A. Johnson and Eleanor McLaughlin. Sure to make conservatives squeamish, this collection treats the most troubling topics frankly.

Sumrall, Amber Coverdale and Dena Taylor. **SEXUAL HARASSMENT: WOMEN SPEAK OUT.** Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1992 (321 pages, \$10.95).

Painful but true, most women have a story of harassment to tell. After Anita Hill, the hearing is all.

Townes, Emilie M., editor. **A TROUBLING IN MY SOUL: WOMANIST PERSPECTIVES ON EVIL AND SUFFERING.** Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1993 (257 pages, \$16.95).

Essential reading in womanist work, indeed in all theological work that deals with the problems of evil and suffering. Signal essays by Delores Williams, Cheryl Gilkes and Frances

Wood, among others, add important insights to Emilie Townes' wise choice of topics and contributors.

Tula, Maria Teresa. **HEAR MY TESTIMONY: MARIA TERESA TULA, HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST OF EL SALVADOR.** Translated and edited by Lynn Stephen. Boston: South End Press, 1994 (240 pages, \$14).

In the tradition of Domitila and Rigoberta Menchu, this testimony of a brave and strong woman's life is a gripping read, a frightening prospect, an inspiring commentary on the brutality of life in El Salvador.

Walton, Heather and Susan Duber, editors. **SILENCE IN HEAVEN: A BOOK OF WOMEN'S PREACHING.** London: SCM Press, 1994 (197 pages, 9.95 Pounds).

This collection of sermons is wide-ranging in themes and styles, but proves that women's words are well worth hearing. Among the best examples are those by Alison Webster on "Eating the Fruit" and Sara Maitland on "Bad Friday."

White, Evelyn C. **THE BLACK WOMEN'S HEALTH BOOK: SPEAKING FOR OURSELVES.** Seattle, WA: The Seal Press, 1990. 1994 (396 pages, \$16.95).

A book full of wisdom which African American women will find essential, and from which all women will learn with gratitude.

Of Special Interest

THE OTHER SIDE, a Christian magazine, has published a special issue entitled "Christians and Homosexuality: Dancing Toward the Light," 300 W. Apsley St., Philadelphia PA 19144 (64 pages, \$5).

The articles, previously published in the magazine, are geared toward a biblically-interested audience. They include such writers as Renita Weems, Letha Dawson Scanzoni, Melanic Morrison and John Linscheid. Great for those who need well-grounded persuasion.

Audio

Walker, Alice, Isabel Allende and Jean Shindola Bolen. **GIVING BIRTH, FINDING FORM.** Boulder, CO: Sounds True Recordings (800-333-9185) (90 minutes, \$10.95).

A fascinating discussion by three writers who provide glimpses of their processes and their perspectives.

News and Notes

WATER is part of the **Women-Church Convergence** which met in February in Baltimore for its twice-yearly gathering. Vicki Quatmann provided a first rate fund raising workshop (yes, we will be asking you for more money because we know you want to collaborate in our important work or you wouldn't be reading this) geared to non-profits with socially conscious agendas.

The group decided to collaborate on Beijing-related activities, including some presence in New York during the preparatory meetings, networking of women and religion on site in China, and activities at home during the conference.

The Convergence discussed welfare reform and released the following statement to the press:

"As Women Church Convergence, we support principles of welfare reform that do not penalize, but rather empower women.

"Why do women need the support of welfare?"

"Because violence continues to persist against women in their own homes, and because social and political structures have systematically failed women, creating a need for economic support.

"Who are 'these women'?"

"These are women who, like most, are tradi-

tionally the caregivers of the young and the old...who in 1995 are still paid less than men. These are women who are forced out of their homes because violence is a dangerous health issue, and because minimum wage jobs do not provide health care benefits or enough to cover child care costs.

"What kind of welfare reform policy would respond to our needs as women?"

"One that does not punish children for being born into poor families...one that provides employment training and jobs with a living wage...and one that insures health benefits will not be lost by gaining employment or losing employment.

"We as Women Church Convergence stand together with women needing economic support and with all who struggle to put this together in an equitable manner."

WATER is collaborating with **Women's Ordination Conference** on their 20th anniversary conference November 10-12, 1995, "Discipleship of Equals: Breaking Bread/Doing Justice." Diann Neu is chairing the liturgy committee and

weaving together the various threads of the conference; Mary Hunt is on the program committee. Register early as space is limited at this historic gathering where feminists will proclaim and celebrate radical equality, thus changing the discussion from patriarchal ordination to feminist ministry. This promises to shake the earth.

Cynthia Lapp, a Wesley Theological Seminary student, is interning this spring at WATER. Cindy brings to bear a keen interest in liturgy, as well as a professionally trained singing voice. She will be here two days a week until May, working with Diann in planning monthly liturgies at WATER and assisting with the many other activities of the office. A Mennonite, feminist and musician, Cindy observes wryly, "These three aspects of my life are usually held in an uncomfortable tension but I continue the struggle to hang onto all three."

Sharon Levy comes to us from LEAP as our newest trainee in practical job skills for the workplace. She is a cheerful presence in the office on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays.



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