



# water wheel

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

## Editorial

The burning of churches is a heinous crime by any measure. So this season the burning of a number of black churches (some white as well) lights up the sky with sights and smells of oppression. Arson is arson; racism is racism. Decent people condemn this in the strongest possible language, but then what?

Anti-racism education belongs in the schools and religious organizations. Our children need to help somehow in the rebuilding lest they think that such unspeakable crimes are tolerable. Here is a religious education lesson waiting to be taught.

Anti-semitism comes under a variety of guises. The recent resolution by the Southern Baptist Convention to "direct our energies and resources toward the proclamation of the Gospel to the Jews" is one such costume. After decades of ecumenical efforts to respect the religious experiences and commitments of others, this blatant disregard for the integrity of Jewish life shocks like a church burning. Here is another religious education lesson waiting to happen - the chance to teach our children that religions belong to people, and people deserve respect.

Some days it seems we are marching backwards in the often excruciating effort to make this world a safe, inclusive place. These hideous happenings prove that enough is too much. Our work only increases, and with it our resolve: *nunca mas*, never again.



## Cyber Heaven?

by Mary E. Hunt

Computers change everything, including religion. But is it good for religious feminists? When Gutenberg transformed the Bible five hundred years ago from a laboriously hand-copied book to what is now the world's greatest best seller, there must have been an equally strong sense that all progress is not necessarily good. Religious revolutions that followed the presses were expressions of deep longing and a search for community. So it is with current cyber religion and all that surrounds it. What's a feminist to do? Befriend a mouse for starters.

The USA is not alone in its cyber-revolution. Proliferation of computer hardware and the extent to which people are using it is ample evidence. Granted, this is still a phenomenon of the wealthiest sector of the globe. But just as televisions and telephones have found their way to the remotest places, so, too, will computers by century's end be commonplace. Many feminist groups around the globe have gotten on-line, a factor that made possible preparations for and follow-up from the UN conference in Beijing.

ber; so-called "snail mail" is increasingly reserved for occasions when only original copy will do. World Wide Web pages are a galloping source of business, educational and cultural exchange. Quality does not match quantity, but there is little basic information - train schedules and stock prices, breaking news and tomorrow's weather - that can't be found on-line. But what's God/ess got to do with it?

One could say that it all began when the fax machine started churning out prayers at the Wailing Wall. Whether real or the stuff of good cartoons, this juxtaposition of the old and the new jarred many people into understanding that late 20th century life is filled with amazing grace.

The Vatican put the Pope's annual "Urbi et Orbi" message on the Internet this year even though the Holy Father became indisposed at the balcony at St. Peter's trying to utter blessings in fifty languages. No worries - technology bailed him out and Catholics around the world could receive the papal word on-line. Earlier, the Vatican had puzzled over whether indul-

*There is no reason to think religions will be exempt from changes such innovative media bring.*

There is no reason to think religions will be exempt from changes such innovative media bring. Religious study, community, worship and images all stand to change. As a feminist, I bring a critical but open view to this, anxious to incorporate the helpful aspects without widening the gap between those on and off line.

More than 27% of adults in the USA have personal computers, with another 10% expected to purchase theirs within the next six months. Nearly half of current PC owners "have modems, will travel." On-line services are growing by leaps and bounds. It is common to give out an e-mail address along with a phone and fax num-

ber; so-called "snail mail" is increasingly reserved for occasions when only original copy will do. World Wide Web pages are a galloping source of business, educational and cultural exchange. Quality does not match quantity, but there is little basic information - train schedules and stock prices, breaking news and tomorrow's weather - that can't be found on-line. But what's God/ess got to do with it?

The study of religions is changing quickly. CD-ROM technology has overhauled biblical studies. Today's scholars find their way through texts with sophisticated aids. Word searches that took a lifetime can be done now in a matter of minutes. None of this guarantees that helpful questions will be asked, but it does mean that *(continued on page 2)*

Editors: Mary E. Hunt and Diann L. Neu

Designer: Diann L. Neu

Editorial Assistant: Carol Murdock Scinto

Computer Consultant: Jessica Weissman

Graphic Artists: Acknowledged when known, and always appreciated.

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.

WATERwheel is published quarterly by the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual. Annual subscription, \$35. Address inquiries to the WATER office. Additional copies of this issue can be ordered for \$5 each. **Complimentary copies are available on request for conferences, seminars, classes or discussion groups.** Include street address and daytime telephone number of the person ordering materials. Send inquiries and comments to:

Editors

WATERwheel

8035 13th Street

Silver Spring, MD 20910-4803 USA

Phone (301) 589-2509; FAX (301) 589-3150

Internet E-mail: mary.hunt@hers.com

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 someone 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.

## Cyber... *(continued from page 1)*

we who want to make religions equal opportunity enterprises need to use such tools as well.

Interactive media offer old religious experiences in new forms. For example, imagine embarking on "Jerusalem: An Interactive Pilgrimage to the Holy City" (Simon & Schuster Interactive for \$29) without leaving home. Many theological journals are going on-line as libraries shrink their shelves to accommodate CD's in addition to (eventually, instead of?) books.

While libraries and classrooms used to be the study sites, now courses are offered on the Net. Some seminaries are going on-line with their classes. This gives new meaning to long-distance education programs: one simply logs on from home and is in school. Professors interact with students on-line. For example, I receive essays on my computer which I critique and send back. What this mode lacks in face-to-face encounters it makes up in efficiency, cost and time.

There is a sense that cyberspace is the fourth dimension. One need understand little of the technical work involved to drive down the information superhighway at great speeds. This is affecting the community-building aspect of religion since it makes widely available many more ways of being in touch.

To date, cyberspace has been a male enclave. Studies show that as in other locations in a patriarchal culture, women and men use it differently. Simply stated, many men tend to use computers like cars - to make a statement about themselves, demonstrate their prowess. Most women, on the other hand, tend to use computers like the kitchen table - to communicate intimately and effectively. I, perhaps naively, think the table approach will prevail in religious

replaced the base community for some people. I got on (and quickly off) a list that provided its readers with almost hourly updates on the well being of its members. The care and concern for one another far surpassed what I have experienced in most churches. But I was cynical enough to think that being thousands of miles away allowed a certain leeway for excess.

Chat-rooms and other "real time" exchanges (when a person at one computer communicates with a person at another via the keyboard instead of by phone or through messages left for later reading) can effect a worshipful aura. Cyber cafes are the latest vogue where one can sip coffee and post messages right from the table. It is another version of the town square, no particular denomination, but a shared sense that reaching out to one another is good. Why the person across the table is not as immediate as the one on-line escapes me, but so be it.

Language and imagery of the divine can't help but be changed by all of this. With memories far more reliable than the most perspicacious of us, computers will in time, I predict, offer language and images that eclipse human ones for God/ess. "Our Father/Mother" rather pales before the novelties ahead with "Our Hard Drive who art heaven..."

The mind of God/ess has suddenly been enlarged by several megabytes. Hitherto magical powers like being able to divide Pi or map the human genome are increasingly accessible. This ups the ante for divinity, or unmask it for the human creation it is. In any case, it gives new meaning to power and with it new reflections on the nature of the divine. Science and religion have been uncomfortable bedfellows over the centuries, but they seem to be cozying up now though not in ways most feminists find edi-

*Women, especially, need encouragement in this arena as fear of computers ranks right up there with math anxiety when it comes to gendered forms of oppression.*

circles, especially in Christianity where there is already a table culture. Men and women need both dimensions. But how race and class differences are exacerbated is of more concern to me.

There is some faint resemblance to old techniques of evangelization in computer fervor. I would be first to acknowledge that computers spread the word in an efficient and economical manner, and that many people feel more connected than ever before to like-minded folks in the world. Voila, some form of community, the quality of which remains to be discerned.

Worship is a little harder to find on-line, but the exchange of multiple messages seems to have

replaced the base community for some people. If the "father, lord, ruler, king" God is replaced by one more powerful that looks like a powerbook, those with powerbooks will continue to fancy themselves God.

I see pluses and minuses in all of this for feminists. First, computers are not a flash in the pan, but a new way to communicate. They are increasingly normative for young people who have grown up with them and who treat them with the nonchalance their elders accord the automobile. So religions have no choice but to get with the program and use technology to best advantage. Women, especially, need encouragement *(continued on page 3)*

## ...Heaven? (continued from page 2)

in this arena as fear of computers ranks right up there with math anxiety when it comes to gendered forms of oppression.

Second, this technological explosion offers a range of ways to channel religious impulses that I encourage: outreach to people in far-flung places; sharing of information and ideas across cultures; personal agency and involvement by people who might not feel comfortable in a local church (computers are an introvert's salvation); and the inexplicable desire to be more at one than separate from the rest of the cosmos, something we used to call love.

Third, at a time when religious interest is on the wane, use of new technologies can fuel it. For example, one local congregation I know is offering its weekly bulletin on-line, saving paper and postage while involving people who might not otherwise show for Sunday services.

The negative side presents some worrisome scenarios, especially to technophobes who would rather that all of this stuff go away. First is the obvious alienation that comes with increased privatization. When one-to-one or one-to-many encounters replace the group at prayer, there is a concomitant loss of community. Touch is gone; sounds and smells of religion are gone; the warmth and assurance people long for are gone. Even the most sophisticated computers do not hug back yet.

Second, opportunities to turn religion into one more consumer commodity abound on-line. If one can buy software to play chess and to worship, to read porn and the Bible, have we really improved much of anything? How money works in all of this is not yet clear. The Internet began as a communication network with strict taboos on the exchange of money. This can spell disaster for religious organizations that depend on contributions. More likely, it will mean that entrepreneurs will go to work to market software and offer services which will generate a healthy profit, quality notwithstanding.

As many religious groups inch toward more egalitarian models of leadership, cyberspace offers plenty of room for those who would centralize information, power and authority. If communication is routed through the one who sets up the system, then increased rather than more diversified authority will prevail. So much for feminist efforts to share power.

The cyber revolution is a new opportunity to put feminist values of inclusivity and diversity, sharing and justice to the test. This means tempering enthusiasm with generosity, sharing both hardware and insights. It calls for a prudent approach so that in their zeal cyber converts not privilege this medium over direct contact. In any case, with the medium now the message, critical thinking is more important than ever.

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

## Beginner's Vow

by Eri DeLorier

I began interning at WATER in February of 1996 as a requirement for a women's studies course at Georgetown University entitled Women and Politics. I had managed to go through four years at Georgetown without ever having taken a women's studies course, and I was unsure of what I was getting myself into.

Through working at WATER, it turned out, I became involved in a dynamic world of beautiful, strong, intelligent women who would eventually force me to realize, always gently and with humor, that I no longer want to be on the periphery of women's issues and concerns. My time at WATER was largely devoted to filing papers and licking stamps, but the excitement of constantly working with dedicated women filled with purpose and ideas left me with an indelible image of the woman that I would someday like to become.

I would like to thank everyone at WATER for teaching me that being a woman is not an inconsequential aspect of my being, and for giving me the impetus to prove that to the world.

## Help! With Funding

After keeping our doors open for more than twelve years principally on grassroots support from you, WATER is prepared to expand by actively seeking grants and other sources of funding. You, our readers, know WATER best, and many of you have connections with or insights into places where we might fruitfully seek money. Some of you are even fundraisers! Please let us know of any ideas you have - community funds, church groups, businesses, foundations - AND of any help you are willing to give us. Thanks for helping us to insure WATER's future.

## The Envelope Please

As with each issue of WATERwheel, we've tucked a small white envelope inside. In development lingo, it's called a "remittance" envelope. To us, it's a critical lifeline to the programs and projects that lie at the heart of our mission.

We rely on you, our donors, to provide us with contributions enough to ensure that each year we can not only continue our programs and projects, but increase our offerings.

So far, thanks to all of you, we're meeting our goals. Now, we are growing. So please, if you haven't made a pledge to WATER this year, and/or if you can make another, take a couple of minutes to write a check and tuck it inside the envelope. Your contribution, together with others, makes the difference.

## Scholarly Promise

by Solveig Boasdotir

Where can you go, having a grant for foreign studies, wanting to finish your dissertation on safety in intimate relationships? First you think that the whole "foreign" world is open to you, even looking for you, only to find that there are not many places that would welcome you. It was my luck to come to WATER. WATER turned out to be not only a safe place for me, but also a great place where knowledge, friendships and generativity go hand in hand.

Looking back on the year I have spent at WATER, there is much for which I am grateful. First of all, the opportunity to come and stay as a visiting scholar in the USA has enabled me, as a European feminist, to connect with and get to know the field of feminist ethics from a new and exciting perspective.

Second, it is invaluable to be able to work, not in isolation, but in the midst of where feminist ethics is happening: where the books arrive warm from the publishing house and one may meet theologians from many parts of the world. All this at WATER.

Third, I appreciate the opportunities through WATER to take part in interesting programs and conferences, of which I found the 1995 WOC Conference to be the greatest single event I had experienced during the year: unforgettable!

Finally, having access to my supervisor whenever I needed, feeling her genuine care and concern, is feminist ethics at its best. I wish WATER "safe" support from the people who know what work is being done there. I hope that it will live long enough for me to send my daughter for an internship in a few years. But of course I will be back many times before that.



# Sabbath:

by Diann L. Neu



*Sabbath provides time for pause. It promises rest from work. Just as in the Genesis story of creation God did not fashion the universe without resting on the seventh day, so we cannot co-create with the Holy One unless we link one kind of time to another. Sabbath reconnects work and beauty, purpose and grace. It provides necessary fallow time.*

*Summer offers a natural period in the calendar year to slow down, to take time, to live easily. It provides a longer sabbath, a mini-sabbatical, a whole season for holy time.*

*This ritual celebrates sabbath in our lives. Adapt it for a weekly sabbath eve or day, a monthly sabbath retreat, or a summer season of sabbath.*

## Preparation

*Choose a relaxing place inside or outside surrounded by nature (i.e., the ocean, a lake, creek, pond, the woods, a yard filled with flowers). Gather candles, one for each participant, and bread, wine, and juice.*

## Welcome

Welcome to this celebration of "Sabbath: A Celebration of Time." When you hear the word sabbath, what comes to your mind?

Let's speak our names and share a few words about sabbath. (*Sharing*)

## Call to Gather

Our theme, "Sabbath: A Celebration of Time," reflects the season of summer. We want to focus on sabbath, a concept or custom that most of us have forgotten almost completely. It may be something some of us will want to revive, or at least aspects of it may fit into our current cultural patterns and our summer needs.

Think of a Jewish Friday evening *Shabbat* or the Spanish word for Saturday, *sabado*, and you get the idea. The sabbath is not an event or a feast as such, but it is time, just time, nothing less than time. So much of religion is about space - holy places, holy lands, holy objects. Sabbath is about holy time.

We are all familiar with the Hebrew story of creation in which God worked hard for six days and then rested, that day of rest being the sabbath. Babylonians and Assyrians kept this lunar sabbath as well; the Goddess Durga in India in her rites of protection for the new mother

and infant acted for six days and then rested.

Perhaps the classic religious text on the sabbath was written by Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel. He says "The Sabbath is not for the sake of the weekdays; the weekdays are for the sake of the Sabbath. It is not an interlude but the climax of living." He goes on to explain how no work should be done on the sabbath, how "labor is a craft, but perfect rest is an art" (*The Sabbath*, by Abraham Joshua Heschel, p. 14).

But for women with home and family responsibilities, at a time in history when most of us are forced to work more and rest less, just how practical is all of this for us. Tonight, we will take some **time**, just time, nothing less than time, to listen and pray, talk and sing about how we might incorporate more sabbath into our lives, since sabbath is in a certain sense a rehearsal for eternity. Let our candle lighting begin.

## Candle Lighting

*(One person lights a candle)*

The Jewish *Shabbat* is ushered in with the kindling of lights. As we light the candles now, let us remember: Blessed is she who rekindles the sacred fires of creation.

To insure that the lights remain a part of our sabbath journeys long after the candles burn away, we cup our hands over the flame and draw the heat towards our eyes three times as we pray:

May She Who Is the Source of Life

    bless us with sabbath rest. (*Echo*)

May the Holy One bless us with sabbath grace.

    (*Echo*)

May Sophia bless us with sabbath peace. (*Echo*)

**Song:** "In Your Presence" by Colleen Fulmer, from *Dancing Sophia's Circle*, c 1994.

We are bathed in radiance, clothed in glory,  
Crowned in splendor, embraced in joy.  
O Wisdom Sophia, Wisdom Sophia,  
The power and presence of God.

## Litany of Returning to a Resting Place

Let us say together the words "let us rest" when I gesture with my open hand.

*All:* Let us rest

*One:* And celebrate time, not space.

*All:* Let us rest

*One:* And attune to holiness in time.

*All:* Let us rest

*One:* And turn to the mystery of creation.

*All:* Let us rest

*One:* And take the opportunity to mend our tattered lives.

*All:* Let us rest

*One:* And delight in the soul and in the body.

*All:* Let us rest

*One:* From the world of creation to the creation of the world.

*All:* Let us rest

*One:* And return to a resting place.

**Song:** "In Your Presence" by Colleen Fulmer

**Reading:** "Light A Candle" by Zelda, translated from the Hebrew by Marcia Falk, c. 1974 by Marcia Lee Falk. Used with permission of the translator. Falk's forthcoming book is *The Book of Blessings: New Jewish Prayers for Daily Life, the Sabbath, and the New Moon Festival* (Harper, 1996).

Light a candle.

Drink wine.

Softly the Sabbath has plucked the sinking sun.

Slowly the Sabbath descends, the rose of heaven in her hand.

How can the Sabbath plant a huge and shining flower in a blind and narrow heart?

How can the Sabbath plant the bud of angels in a heart of raving flesh?

Can the rose of eternity grow in an age enslaved to destruction, an age enslaved to death?

Light a candle!

Drink wine!

Slowly the Sabbath descends and in her hand

the flower, and in her hand the sinking sun.

## Silence

# A Celebration of Time

**Reading:** "The Sabbath" by Charlotte Anker, from *The Reconstructionist*, October 14, 1966. Used with permission of the publisher.

What do I  
Whose child eyes glowed with envy at the sight  
Of fir trees strung with Christmas light  
Know of the Sabbath?

What can I  
Who smiled on the springtime's gayer rites and  
petulantly said:  
"Why must we eat unleavened bread?"  
Say of the Sabbath?

How should I  
Who, rebel-masked, scorned Friday evening's  
candle glow and outstretched hands  
And asked, "Why can't we simply be  
Americans?"  
Observe the Sabbath?

Yet, through some process science still  
endeavors to define,  
One day I looked on four millennia carved  
by chance or some design  
And said, "All this is mine."

When oven smoke curled black above  
Auschwitz, Dachau, Belsen  
And ashes, soap, gold teeth amassed where once  
a people, learned, proud, had been,  
I felt the numbers burn into my skin.

When shtetl artisans and scholars watched their  
neighbors murder, loot, harass  
And re-avowed their faith and blessed the wine  
and said, "This, too, shall pass."  
I drained a glass.

When ships sailed from Spain laden with the  
seed of Jews who had, for centuries,  
Iberian rule endured,  
And oceans deepened with the tears of that vast  
horde,  
I stood on board.

The wails of prophets, brilliance of the kings,  
with all their flaws,  
The mettle of the men who gave the Romans  
pause,  
Grasped me with vise-like claws.

At last, I stood with Moses on the mountain,  
heard God's will expressed.  
And when God said, "On this day ye shall rest,"  
I was impressed.

## Silence

**Reading:** "Shechinah" by Chana Bell, from *Women Speak to God*, Marcia Cohn Spiegel & Deborah Lipton Kremsdorf, editors, c. 1987. Published by the Women's Institute for Continuing Jewish Education. Used with permission of the author.

Perched on our shoulders  
a colorful butterfly  
you whisper  
into pores  
shabbat's sweetness

we breathe you in  
breathe the week out  
take in roundness  
letting go of sharp angles

we breathe in the *neshama yiteira*  
the soul of the world to come  
in awe  
we sway not march

As we kindle shabbat candles  
you glide into our dark corners  
warming us  
dissolving our dense bodies  
into light

## Silence

### Reflection

The central questions for our reflection are: how do we experience sabbath, or how can we help one another create such time in our busy lives?

Let us take a few minutes to talk with each other (in groups of three) about how we make sabbath a regular part of our lives. (*Sharing*)

**Blessing of Bread:** "On Putting the Sabbath Loaf into the Oven," from *Four Centuries of Jewish Women's Spirituality*, Ellen M. Umansky and Dianne Ashton, editors, c 1992. Used with permission of editor.

*(One person holds bread and says)*

This prayer, probably from women's oral tradition, was published in an anonymous collection entitled *Tkhines* that appeared in Amsterdam in 1648. It shows how women can make our kitchens a holy place and make holy the act of baking bread.

"This the woman says when she puts the Sabbath loaf into the oven: Creator of all the world, in your hand is all blessing. I come now to re-

vere your holiness, and I pray you to bestow your blessing on the baked goods. Send an angel to guard the baking, so that all will be well baked, will rise nicely, and will not burn, to honor the holy Sabbath (which you have chosen so that Israel your children may rest thereon) and over which one recites the holy blessing - as you blessed the dough of Sarah and Rebecca our mother. My God, listen to my voice; you are the God who hears the voices of those who call to you with the whole heart. May you be praised to eternity."

Blessed are you, Source of Life, for nourishing us with the sabbath bread of the women who have gone before us. (*Share the bread*)

### Blessing the Fruit of the Vine

*(One person takes the cups of wine and juice and says)*

Blessed are you, Source of Life, for weaving necessary fallow time into our lives. (*Share the fruit of the vine*)

### Final Blessing

Seven is a sacred number, representing the division of time, which honors the seventh day, the seven colors of the rainbow, seven notes in the octave, seven manifest spheres of energy in the mystical tree of life. We close tonight with seven blessings. Please repeat after me:

Blessed be the children. (*Echo*)

Blessed be the elders. (*Echo*)

Blessed be our intimate relations, close friends, lifelong partners. (*Echo*)

Blessed be the sacred day. (*Echo*)

Blessed be the earth and all that dwell therein. (*Echo*)

Blessed be liberation from injustice. (*Echo*)

Blessed be the summertime. (*Echo*)

### Greeting of Peace

Let us embrace each other with a sabbath blessing, a wish to reconnect beauty and work, grace and purpose. May we be blessed on this sabbath. (*Greeting*)

**Song:** "Blessing Song" by M.T. Winter, from *Woman Prayer, Woman Song*, c 1987.

May the blessing of God go before you.

May Her grace and peace abound.

May Her Spirit live within you.

May Her love wrap you 'round.

May Her blessing remain with you always.

May you walk on holy ground.

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

---

## WATER Staff in Latin America

WATER staff Mary Hunt and Diann Neu joined Brazilian theologian Ivone Gebara and the women of Con-spirando in Santiago, Chile for the planning of **A Shared Garden**. The three of them spoke with a group of 200 women and a few men who were intent on proving that strong women's voices will not be stilled regardless of Vatican efforts. Con-spirando produces an excellent publication (in Spanish - contact WATER for subscription info; well worth the price) and offers programs, like the outdoor fire ritual for the beginning of autumn which we celebrated. Diann Neu gave a day long workshop on feminist liturgy which trained women in Chile for future work in the field.

In Buenos Aires, Argentina, Diann and Mary presented a weekend workshop on religion and violence for 50+ women from La Urdimbre de Aquehua, a grassroots group which focuses on feminist theology and spirituality. It was fascinating to experience the wide diversity of participants - from barrio women to lawyers - and the deep concern and insights they brought to the issues.

WATER folks joined women ministers and seminary students through the Centro de Estudios Cristianos (CEC) for training on religion and violence. CEC staff Estela Furlani returned the visit at WATER a month later where plans were laid for further collaboration. WATER people met with press and ecumenical colleagues and participated in the launching of the new issue of a feminist journal dealing with psychological and sociological aspects of violence against women.

In Montevideo, Uruguay, WATER people, under the auspices of the local *Catolicas por el Derecho a Decidir* (the sister group to Catholics for a Free Choice in the USA) and *Mujer Ahora*, offered a workshop on religion and violence for thirty participants. CDD and *Mujer Ahora*, which works against violence against women, continue to be integral parts of the growing network which will form **A Shared Garden**, our next collaborative effort.

---

## A Shared Garden

First came years of long-distance preparation, collaboration, anticipation. Now "A Shared Garden: Women, Spiritualities, Ethics and Theologies" moves from planning stage to reality, with the initial gathering of an intercontinental, structured, ongoing academic program scheduled for 1997, funding permitting.

Designed to bring together women of South and North America to study, celebrate and strategize together to effect new ways of "doing theology," the project is the result of joint efforts of Con-spirando in Chile, WATER in the USA and Ivone Gebara on behalf of a collective now forming in Brazil. Eight women met early this spring in Santiago, Chile, to define the program's objectives, methodology and participation; they are Judy Ress, Ivone Gebara, Doris Munoz, Diann L. Neu, Josefina Hurtado, Bridget Cooke, Ute Seibert-Cuadra and Mary E. Hunt.

The inaugural seminar will be held January 27 to February 7, 1997, in Santiago, with Con-spirando as host organization. The second two weeks, June 16 to 27, 1997, is scheduled for Silver Spring, MD, with WATER hosting. Both will focus on the subject "Beyond Violence: Solidarity and Ecofeminism" from four angles: history, theo-ethics, deconstruction/reconstruction (looking at religious myths, symbols, texts and images and their relationship to violence), and action, including spiritual resources, strategies and political steps that can be taken "to assure that we, our children and our planet can live beyond violence."

Participants will be women involved in activist work in their communities who commit to sharing program content with their local groups, and women working in social change from a feminist religious perspective. Both seminars will include resource people from both continents, as well as a small number of participants from outside the host region - in Santiago, a few North Americans, in Silver Spring a few from Latin America. To assure continuity, several in each group will be part of both presentations.

Among academics and activists who are supporting the program are Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, Elsa Tamez, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Wanda Deifelt, Letty Russell, Tania Mara Viera Sampaio and Madonna Kolben-schlag. They will lend their skills to develop a highly participative learning process that incorporates an ecofeminist as well as global justice perspective into theological education.

Questions addressed will span a wide array of disciplines: philosophy, anthropology, psychology, ecology, economics, sociology, literature and the arts. The local team for each seminar will decide how the material will be shaped, but the core team will provide an outline of the topics

and content to be covered. Following completion of the seminar, each participant will return to her home group prepared to share the experience. Twice during the following year it is hoped that she will be able to meet again with sister participants from her country to reinforce and move ahead with the agenda.

In announcing the program, the organizers make clear that it will be academically rigorous and at the same time within the reach of women who would not ordinarily have access to formal theological education. For those who wish to obtain academic credit, there is the prospect of obtaining three graduate credits from the Seminario Biblico Latinoamericano in Costa Rica.

"We see this project as committed to simplicity and to enhancing Earth's life systems as we gather to look for and celebrate answers to our questions," say originators of the plan in their announcement of its launch. "WATER and Con-spirando offer their infrastructure and team of professionals to help the Garden grow. At this point, we envision a one-year program, but our hope is that **A Shared Garden** will become a small but significant reference point in the Americas where we grapple creatively with the theological questions we are asking."



# Resources

Berkshire Clergywomen and Allison Stokes. **WOMEN PASTORS.** New York: Crossroad, 1995 (180 pages, \$14.95).

These clergywomen illustrate the strides women are making in mainline Protestant churches, and how far they have yet to go.

Blevins, Carolyn DeArmond. **WOMEN IN CHURCH HISTORY: A BIBLIOGRAPHY.** Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1995 (114 pages, \$30).

Valuable reference for libraries and scholars.

Bondi, Roberta C. **MEMORIES OF GOD: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON A LIFE.** Nashville: Abingdon, 1995 (205 pages, \$14.95).

What women put up with and still survive, what women are taught and still believe, make the stuff of a powerful and well written reflection. May it change lives so depression and oppression are banished.

Bunch, Charlotte and Niamh Reilly. **DEMANDING ACCOUNTABILITY: THE GLOBAL CAMPAIGN AND VIENNA TRIBUNAL FOR WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS.** New York: The Center for Women's Global Leadership and the United Nations Development Fund for Women, 1994 (169 pages, \$15).

A powerful example of what needs to be done in the face of historical and contemporary horrors against women.

Edelman, Marian Wright. **GUIDE MY FEET: PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS ON LOVING AND WORKING FOR CHILDREN.** Boston: Beacon Press, 1995 (210 pages, \$17.95).

A lovely prayer book, including a prayer by Diann L. Neu, to encourage and inspire.

Finson, Shelley Davis. **A HISTORICAL REVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF FEMINIST LIBERATION THEOLOGY, The CRIAW Papers, No. 34.** Ottawa: CRIAW/ICREF, 151 Slater Street, Suite 408, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5 H3 (99 pages, \$5).

A useful overview with helpful bibliographic materials.

Flory, Margaret. **MOMENTS IN TIME: ONE WOMAN'S ECUMENICAL JOURNEY.** New York: Friendship Press, 1995 (121 pages, \$5.95).

Margaret Flory is ecumenism in the minds and hearts of so many people. These vignettes of her remarkable life carry the wisdom, charm and serendipity that continue to make her a vital international networker.

Freeman, Martha, editor. **ALWAYS, RACHEL: THE LETTERS OF RACHEL CARSON AND DOROTHY FREEMAN, 1952-1964.** Boston: Beacon Press, 1995 (608 pages, \$35).

A treasure. Letters between these two women prove that love and friendship take many forms, and that even the most accomplished professionals have affective lives as well. Thank goodness.

Klein, Anne Carolyn. **MEETING THE GREAT BLISS QUEEN: BUDDHISTS, FEMINISTS, AND THE ART OF THE SELF.** Boston: Beacon Press, 1995 (307 pages, \$25).

Rarely are such fully differentiated theories and practices, feminism and Buddhism in this case, heard in conversation on their own terms. It is a rich experience to listen in and join the discussion. A remarkable book.

Lambert, Ellen Zetzel. **THE FACE OF LOVE: FEMINISM AND THE QUESTION OF BEAUTY.** Boston: Beacon Press, 1995 (256 pages, \$24).

A mature approach to the feminist dilemma of beauty. Conclusion: beauty is in the eye of the beholder and the beheld; one is beautiful inside and out. Read this to counter the stereotypes and regroup yourself.

McBride, James. **WAR, BATTERING, AND OTHER SPORTS: THE GULF BETWEEN AMERICAN MEN AND WOMEN.** Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1995 (192 pages, \$15).

A challenging look at the intersection of football, war and domestic violence, with perhaps the best critique of the men's movement yet published.

Morrison, Melanie. **THE GRACE OF COMING HOME: SPIRITUALITY, SEXUALITY AND THE STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE.** Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1995 (184 pages, \$10.95).

This forthright statement of belief and practice is a prod to all who vacillate between openness and security. The firm foundation of frankness makes the choice obvious, the fruits many.

Ortega, Ofelia, editor. **WOMEN'S VISIONS: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION, CELEBRATION, ACTION.** Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 1995 (193 pages, \$18.95).

Overviews of women's theological efforts in many settings. A good "state of the question" as the WCC's Decade in Solidarity with Women marches on.

Pala, Achola O. **CONNECTING ACROSS CULTURES AND CONTINENTS: BLACK WOMEN SPEAK OUT ON IDENTITY, RACE AND DEVELOPMENT.** New York: UNIFEM, 1995 (89 pages, \$9.95).

The ways black women around the world are able to make their needs known and their insights heard will shape the next century.

Purvis, Sally B. **THE STAINED GLASS CEILING: CHURCHES AND THEIR WOMEN PASTORS.** Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995 (108 pages, \$11.99).

Two case studies do not a trend make, but these prove helpful for understanding the many and subtle ways women can make change.

Webster, Alison R. **FOUND WANTING: WOMEN, CHRISTIANITY AND SEXUALITY.** New York: Cassell, 1995 (208 pages, \$15.95).

A refreshing approach to the dilemma of being a woman who is Christian, thinking, sexual and justice-seeking. Many voices, especially Alison Webster's, articulate the problems and point toward creative solutions.

## Audio Tapes

**WOMEN AND THE WORD, 1995.** The annual gathering of the Anna Howard Shaw Center at Boston University School of Theology is now available on tape featuring Dr. Toinette Eugene, Bishop Sharon Rader and Dr. Mary E. Hunt on issues focused on "Embodied Selves, Embodied Preaching." Stimulating and great for study groups. Four tapes for \$18 (includes shipping and handling) can be ordered from the Center at 745 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215.



# Summer Scene



Warm weather and the annual school/job hiatus bring new friends and long-standing ones to the WATER office from across the Atlantic as well as this continent.

**Christine Bandilla** from Munich, Germany, was in attendance for three weeks browsing the shelves and thinking about the relationship of feminist theology and the business world.

**Lanell Dike**, a WATER intern during her Santa Cruz College days, returned for the summer between her Community Enterprises work just completed and her fall City Year job in San Jose, California.

**The Rev. Ann Cathrin Jarl**, a doctoral student from Stockholm, Sweden, spent time work-

ing on her dissertation on feminist ethics and economics.

**Maria Scinto McNeal** spent a month refining her editing skills and learning about WATER from the inside out.

**Monique Miyake-Maier**, recent graduate of Mount Holyoke, came back for her second summer internship before starting Harvard Divinity School in the fall.

**Richard Russell** has the distinction of being the first man to intern at WATER following his recent graduation from Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge.



Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual  
8035 13th Street, Silver Spring, MD 20910-4803 USA

Return Postage Guaranteed

## Inside

Editorial, 1  
Cyber Heaven?, 1  
Beginner's Vow, 3  
Scholarly Promise, 3  
Help! With Funding, 3  
The Envelope Please, 3  
Sabbath: A Celebration of Time, 4  
WATER Staff in Latin America, 6  
A Shared Garden, 6  
Resources, 7  
Summer Scene, 8

## Complimentary

To Share With A Friend

Non-profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Silver Spring, MD  
Permit No. 1701