



waterwheel

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

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A Rock, A River, A Tree: Thirty-five Years of WATER By Mary E. Hunt

When poet Maya Angelou proclaimed “On the Pulse of Morning” at the 1993 inauguration of President William J. Clinton, she provided the metaphor for what WATER has created in its first 35 years: a rock, a river, and a tree.

The rock is the Alliance, the amazing, expansive group of people who find their way to WATER. Whether in person, on-line, in print, on the phone, or even in their imaginations, many people tell us that WATER is a touchstone for them. This core group, now thousands in number from dozens of countries, gives shape and contour to WATER in a world beset by isolation and silo thinking. Knowing that one is part of something larger in the struggle to use feminist religious values to create social and religious change is what Alliance people treasure.

The river is WATER offerings, a moving platform from which many resources flow. Whether lectures and articles, liturgies and workshops, counseling and spiritual direction, social media and the newsletter WATERwheel, decades of work form a steady stream. While content has changed with the times, the fundamental direction has not shifted—those who are marginalized have priority, those who are privileged are invited, expected to act in solidarity until structural changes wipe out the differences.

The tree is the springboard WATER provides. More than 85 interns have trained at WATER; dozens of Visiting Scholars have joined to do their work. These people are now in graduate school, in ministry, on faculties, running non-profits, in the media, and beyond. They are in dozens of institutions on several continents using what they experienced in our office. Despite all they learned from scholars, from reading and

writing, our colleagues often comment most on the value WATER places on hospitality. Coffee, lunch, tea at the table with endless guests are what stand out as signal moments.

Some of us who started WATER might have thought that we would accomplish our original mission—the inclusion of women in religion and culture. Two realities prevented that.

First, our original mission was far too limited. It is not simply gender female persons who are marginalized. Rather, living in peril are people of color, LGBTQIA persons, those who are living with disabling conditions, people made poor, indeed Earth itself. These voices and spirits need to be included in any feminist religious efforts.

Second, we seriously misjudged just how hard it would be to accomplish even our original goals, much less change the interstructured forms of oppression that we now face. We did not factor in adequately the virulent backlash, the powerful negation of persons and groups by those who hold power. Present theo-political debacles—for example, the implosion of the Roman Catholic Church due to clergy sexual abuse and episcopal cover up, and the moral morass that is the Trump Administration—are ample evidence that racism and sexism, xenophobia and homophobia, greed, and entitlement are on the rise.

It is as if WATER were created to deal with today's morally hideous reality bringing thirty-five years of experience to bear. Those years have flown by. History will judge the benefits and deficits of WATER. We stay focused on our mission, rejoicing in the rock, the river, and the tree along the way. Wild grace has led us to actualize the steady, sustaining of a vision. That grace has brought us to this “Pulse of Morning” as we look toward our fortieth anniversary with gusto. ■

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Left: Susan O'Brien, WATER Intern '92, and Mary E. Hunt catch up during Mary's talk at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland. **Top Center:** Hannah Dorfman, WATER Intern '16-18 (center) meets with current WATER Interns Melissa Cedilla (left) and Emily Neufeld (right) to share how to create a WATERwheel! **Top right:** The altar from WATERritual, “International Day of Peace: The World Needs Peacemakers.” **Bottom (l to r):** Loretto and Lutheran Volunteers of Junia House relax at a Hunt-Neu dinner: Natalie Trujillo, Leora Mosman, Melissa Feito, Melissa Cedillo, and Ahna Van Valkenburg.

WATER's Commitment for 35 Years and Forward!

Our Mission is to use feminist religious values to create social and religious change.

We affirm that all of WATER's efforts are focused on changing the cultural and intellectual assumptions that ground discrimination, exclusion, and destruction. We gather in service of a very different vision—inclusion, equality, and justice. All are welcome to participate in the steady sustaining of our vision in the many ways it unfolds around the world.

Thank YOU!

As we reflect on 35 years of WATER, we are so grateful for YOU.

YOUR *commitment* to WATER's work inspires us and makes a difference for future generations.

YOUR *generosity* sustains WATER's communications, resources, programming, and networks for the WATER community and for the broader world of religious feminists and allies.

YOU *ensure* that WATER's much-needed work for social and religious justice will continue in the next generations of feminists in religion.



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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 people to address structural violence for thirty-five years—making WATER one of the oldest feminist religious non-profit organizations in the world.

Join the WATER community as we work toward inclusive theologies and rituals, push for social change, and collaborate from inclusive perspectives. To learn more about what we do, visit us at www.waterwomensalliance.org.

Mary E. Hunt, Diann L. Neu: Co-directors | Melissa Cedillo, Emily Neufeld: Staff Associates | Joe Scinto: Volunteer

WATER is a 510(c)3 organization. All donations are tax deductible. We thank you for your support. © 2018 Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual.

Introducing Our Newest WATERdocumentary!

We are excited to announce that we have a new WATERdocumentary, *Celebrating 35 Years of WATER and Forward!* produced by WATER's former staff member Hannah Dorfman. The video chronicles the work and impact of WATER. It highlights how WATER started by gathering together 13 women across denominations and cultures and how it has grown into a worldwide, intergenerational Alliance.

Catch a glimpse into “everyday” life in the office, the passion behind ritual, WATERtalks from the best and brightest in the field, and the unparalleled hospitality that is shown to each person who connects with WATER. Grab a mug of tea, watch, and celebrate with us what 35 years of WATER means as we develop our plans for the future. Watch on Youtube at the WATERwomensalliance channel.





2018 WATER Program Highlights

You can find audio of programs, notes, and ritual scripts at www.waterwomensalliance.org. Register for upcoming events on our website or email waterstaff@hers.com. Join us at WATER or by phone.

WATERtalks

In July, **Nami Kim of Spelman College** presented *The Gendered Politics of the Korean Protestant Right: Hegemonic Masculinity*. She brought a Korean feminist perspective to look at manhood and fatherhood restoration, the anti-LGBT movement, and Islamophobic racism.

In September, **Rebecca Todd Peters of Elon University** shared her book *Trust Women: A Progressive Christian Argument for Reproductive Justice*. She laid out a reproductive justice framework for dealing with women's health issues.

WATERrituals

In September, **Diann L. Neu and the WATER staff** gathered us to celebrate *International Day of Peace: The World Needs Peacemakers*. In the midst of a troubled world, we raised up women peacemakers throughout history, and gave thanks for their witness.

WATERmeditations

In July, **Mary E. Hunt** encouraged us to *Taste and See* with chocolate and strawberries! We reflected on this sweet treat, letting the taste of things we enjoy guide us into deeper reflection.

In September, **Mary E. Hunt** invited us to *Rest Well* and contemplate how resting is essential to a healthy life. She used insights from Joan Chittister who believes, "Maybe what we all need most is time to process what we already know so that we can put it together differently, even more effectively than ever before."

WATERcasts

Rev. M Barclay of Enfleshed speaks about *Feminist and Queer Theology in Action*. Enfleshed is an organization that seeks to provide liturgy materials that include the realities of bodily experience.

Marie Fortune and Emily Cohen of FaithTrust Institute explain how *#MeToo Meets Religion Through FaithTrust Institute*. They speak about their work and the impact it has had on them and the world.

Nancy Wilson and Lauren Bennett of Metropolitan Community Churches describe *A Church for All* and their experience of coordinating a church centered on inclusion.

Jean Stokan of the Sisters of Mercy Justice Team describes *Bringing Justice by Touching Wounds and Hope*. She talks about her work for justice in Central America and the United States' impact on that region.

Women Crossing Worlds

In Spain, **Mary E. Hunt** lectured at the 38th Theological Congress on *The Power of Silence in the Work of Justice*. The conference focused on the role of mysticism in the work of liberation theology.

In Ireland, **Mary E. Hunt** spoke at Trinity College on *Mapping Forty Years of Feminist Theology, Ethics, and Ritual* sponsored by Woman Spirit Ireland, The Institute for Feminism and Religion led by WATER colleague **Mary Condren**.

WATERcounseling

Diann L. Neu does spiritual direction, psychotherapy, clergy supervision, and pastoral counseling at WATER for individuals, couples, and groups. Call 301.589.2509 to make an appointment.

Toasting Our 35 Years!

By Diann L. Neu

Pour yourself a glass of WATER, and drink to our donors, starting with the Sisters of Loretto who gave us our first grant, and the many others like you who give WATER life. *Cheers!*

Toast our pioneering Co-directors and vibrant WATER Staff and Alliance for the first 35 years of creative and responsive programs, projects, rituals, and publications. *Sláinte!*

Give thanks for the more than 85 Interns who have graced WATER with their time and justice efforts, and the many visiting scholars, ministers, and activists who have written theses, articles, sermons, and books here. *L'chaim!*

Raise a glass (she preferred a cup of tea) to Carol Murdock Scinto, our longtime editor and colleague. She, like some of our early and stalwart supporters, has gone to eternal glory, but our Library of more than 6,000 books is her brilliant legacy. *Cheerio!*

Pay tribute to our WATERtalk speakers, the Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network, Women Crossing Worlds colleagues, the WATERmeditation and WATERritual communities whose scholarship, spirituality, and activism inspire, challenge, and nourish generations. *iSalud!*

Honor our colleagues in the Women-Church Convergence, Center for Womanist Leadership, Feminist Studies in Religion, FaithTrust Institute, Quixote Center, New Ways Ministry, Loretto Volunteer Program, Mennonite Voluntary Service, and the many religious communities, seminaries, justice organizations, and feminist groups with whom we collaborate. *Gānbēi!*

Join your spirit with women in Canada, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Brasil, Ecuador, Mexico, Cuba, Guatamala, Germany, Austria, Iceland, Switzerland, Ireland, England, Sweden, Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere who are part of this wonderful WATER Alliance. *Skal!*

Drink to the bright future of WATER. To our collect health! To our young feminists and to their children!

With glasses in our hands and gratitude in our hearts, we toast YOU for 35 years of grounding and propelling the resistance, persistence, and insistence of religious feminists together. *To YOU!*

© 2018 Diann Neu is Co-founder and Co-director of Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER), dneu@hers.com



WATER
turns
35!



Top left 1985: Carol Coston, Diann Neu and Mary E. Hunt at "Connecting Conversations: Women, Work, Economy." **Top right 2000:** Mary E. Hunt, Carol Scinto, and Diann Neu at Carol's 75th birthday. **Middle left 1983:** Mary E. Hunt in Buenos Aires, Argentina. **Middle right 1984:** Diann L. Neu in Cordoba, Argentina. **Bottom left 1987:** March to the Vatican Embassy: Women's Rights Are Human Rights. Mary E. Hunt (2nd row, r). Diann L. Neu (3rd row, r). Carol Scinto (middle in red). **Bottom right 2018:** WATER Staff Associates Emily Neufeld (left) and Melissa Cedillo (right) at the Supreme Court in support of Dr. Christine Blasey Ford. **Far Right 2018:** Mary E. Hunt, Joe Scinto, and Diann L. Neu toast you with gratitude.