



**Top l to r:** Josefin Hurtado Neira of the Women and Gender Desk of Mission 21, shared ideas about women's programs. Dolly Pomerleau, co-founder of Quixote Center, met with Interns about Activist Work. Emilie Townes, Dean of Vanderbilt Divinity School, shared insights into womanist theology with Interns. **Bottom l to r:** Mary E. Hunt with Timothy Roberts at Dignity LA's 50th Anniversary celebration. Annabeth Roeschley, M.Div. student at Chicago Theological Seminary, visited after delivering her sermon at Hyattsville Mennonite Church. Diann Neu and Joan Chittister at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, DC. **Right:** Emily Derstine, elder lawyer in Philadelphia, visits to share updates.

WATER's Commitment to Justice!

We at WATER are chilled by and oppose the unjust treatment of immigrants, the lack of attention to climate change, threats to reproductive health access, continued discrimination against LGBTQ and especially trans people, and other egregious policies currently in play. 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 and work in service of a very different vision—inclusion, equality, and justice. All are welcome.

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- To you who give when you can with such enthusiasm, thank you.
- To you who give your time and prayers, thank you.

Please consider WATER in your year-end giving. You can count on us to keep feminist religious values alive in these dangerous times. Please donate today. Use the enclosed envelope, set up monthly giving. Give online at [waterwomensalliance.org](http://waterwomensalliance.org). Call us if you want to chat about how you can be supportive. Thank you.



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Who We Are

WATER is a global interreligious 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 and religious change. Founded in 1983 by Mary E. Hunt and Diann L. Neu, we have been empowering people to address structural violence for over 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 and religious change, and collaborate from inclusive perspectives. To learn more about what we do, visit us at [www.waterwomensalliance.org](http://www.waterwomensalliance.org).

Mary E. Hunt, Diann L. Neu: Co-directors | Techika Rhodes: Intern | Hannah Dorfman, Emily Neufeld: Staff | Joe Scinto: Volunteer

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Coping with World Turmoil

By Mary E. Hunt

Every generation tends to think that its situation is graver or more challenging than any time before. The global political turmoil at this writing—US foreign policy in shambles, Brexit in question, Turkey and Syria on the edge, Russia dominating the scene, China at odds with Hong Kong, ecological destruction already too far advanced to save vast swaths of the planet—rivals any I have experienced.

Outcomes are iffy at best. Living in the Washington, DC area makes much of this local news. Many people, even those quite remote from the most acute scenes, are visibly upset with good reason. I ponder what it means to be involved in feminist theology, ethics, and ritual at such a time as this, and how we at WATER might be most useful. Several strategies occur that might be helpful as others think through their responsibilities and possibilities as well.

A traditional role of religions has been to function as community gathering places, both literal and figurative. WATER is that place for many people. Being nondenominational and including many spiritual-but-not-religious folks, we have discovered that both an open door and an open phone are crucial for the in-gathering of those who want to share uncertainties, gather data, and make well-informed decisions in hard times. They want to pray and meditate too, so we offer those as regular options. I urge other groups to do the same. There is no substitute for real time contact, even by phone, Zoom, or Skype to hear diverse opinions and share hopes.

Another effective strategy is to engage in the critical study that hones analytic skills. Doing so in multi-national settings is the gold standard. It is no wonder that the topic for WATER's 23rd Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network meeting is climate change. It is no coincidence that our speakers are from Brasil and Australia,

two places deeply affected by the current crises.

A third way that works is to take angst seriously and turn it into action. There is monumental uncertainty, especially for those who experience food scarcity, water shortages, power outages, and the like. At the same time, some others watch their retirement accounts grow exponentially and their children's salaries exceed theirs as the gap grows between elites and the rest. Feminist approaches to socializing resources, for example, giving and receiving that would transform the world that Genevieve Vaughan refers to as a "the gift economy," bear careful consideration. We encourage such sharing, pushing ourselves beyond our giving comfort zones to bring about real change.

Finally, since so many roots in injustice can be traced to a judging God, a Ruler King, lordship and dominance, we encourage a wholesale overhaul of religious images and symbols. Resistance to that work is the measure of its necessity. Imagine if common language about the divine were gender inclusive, better, not anthropomorphic at all. Consider what a creation story that puts plants and animals on the same plane as people would do for ecology. Think about ways to teach children that diversity and difference, not sameness and dominance are to be celebrated.

The turmoil will not end soon. WATER and friends will cope, and in so doing participate in its transformation. ■

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A WATER WELCOME TO TECHIKA RHODES

We are delighted that Wesley Theological Seminary second year Master of Divinity student Techika Rhodes will do her Practice in Ministry and Mission (field education) at WATER for 2019-2020. She is a graduate of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock with a Sociology major. In addition to her studies, Techika, a Missionary Baptist/Pentecostal member, is also a musician who sings and plays the trombone, so we look forward to her hand in WATERrituals.

Techika aspires to start her own non-profit organization. Learning the nuts and bolts at WATER, combined with a deep commitment to social justice make her a welcome colleague. The Rev. Clarafrancie D. Cromer, a Wesley graduate who also did her PMM at WATER, is her Clergy Partner.





# Reflections from WATER 2019 Interns

## From Emily Neufeld, Mennonite Voluntary Service:

In my year at WATER, I learned the power of hospitality, resilience, and community. Hospitality emerged from the hours spent in conversation (with a cup of tea in hand) hosting prominent feminist scholars, question askers, and change-makers. Resilience was obvious in the way we kept hope and action at the forefront of the day-to-day work at WATER in a time of political corruption. Most importantly, community grew from the investment Mary and Diann continually make in my life, friendships formed with summer interns (Claire, Kali, Kennedy), and support that continues from countless women who are all part of this powerful Alliance.

## From Kali Huiyan Lo Ng, Beloit College:

I came into WATER as a Religious Studies and Creative Writing major from Beloit College. I had spent my education so far studying religion in a classroom (without any feminist input in the curriculums), and I wanted hands-on experience applying myself in a functioning nonprofit that worked in an area I cared about.

As it turned out, I had an amazing experience at WATER. It completely changed the way I think about my work in the future, and the community of feminist leaders and scholars around me. From day one, Mary, Diann, and Emily welcomed me with genuine warmth and immediately familiarized me with what was happening in the community, also encouraging me to contribute to conversations and creative projects.

I made work I was proud of, such as book reviews, teleconference notes, and even a research essay. I saw how collaboration improves a community, and how community improves what you accomplish. Interning at the WATER office and meeting so many incredible women reminded me that religious studies and social justice work are absolutely essential parts of my life and others'. I know that WATER and what I've learned from my summer at the office will continue to influence my work.



From l to r: Diann L. Neu, Kali Huiyan Lo Ng, Emily Neufeld, and Mary E. Hunt: on Capital Hill at Catholic Day of Action to oppose the White House’s treatment of immigrants.

## From Kennedy Thedford, Agnes Scott College:

I am a Junior at Agnes Scott College, studying Religion & Social Justice and Spanish. At Agnes we aim toward social justice, but since we are a small college we do not have the resources to focus on minority views in religion like feminism, womanism, and queer theology.

At WATER, I was exposed to new theologies for the first time. I loved working with Mary and Diann to learn about women in Church history and to experience the diversity of rituals. I loved working with the other interns Emily, Kali, and Claire and learning how they experienced religion in different ways. I learned from WATER that religion is not just studying and prayer, but also action. ■

# Fall WATER Program Highlights

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

## WATERtalks

In July, **Annmarie Sanders, IHM**, shared *However Long the Night: Making Meaning in a Time of Crisis*. She told the story of what was learned by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious during a six-year crisis (2009-2015) when the Vatican’s Congregation for the doctrine of the Faith suddenly and very publicly confronted the organization with forceful questions and negative assumptions.

In July, **Dolly Pomerleau** presented *A Discussion on the Quixote Center and the Continuing Journey of Activist Work*. Dolly, a seasoned activist, is the co-founder with Bill Callahan of Quixote Center, a gathering of people who work and pray with laughter and who reach for the stars that seem too distant to be touched, or too dim to be worth the effort.

In September, **Marianne Duddy-Burke** focused her conversation on *DignityUSA: Passion, Persistence, Prophetic Witness: Celebrating 50 Years and Inspired for What’s Ahead*. She laid out the many challenges DignityUSA and groups like it face as LGTBQA+ people deal with the current backlash and the lack of rights in many countries.

## WATERrituals

In July, **Diann L. Neu and the WATER staff** invited us to *Hand in Hand: Imagine*. We blessed our hands and gave thanks for the many ways our hands reach out and connect to beloved family, friends, and colleagues around the world wherever they live.

In September, **Diann L. Neu and the WATER staff** gathered us to celebrate *Lift Up Peacemakers for International Day of Peace*. In the midst of a troubled world, we asked: “What kind of peacemakers do we need?” We raised up women peacemakers throughout history, gave thanks for their witness, and challenged each other to continue to act for peace.

## WATERmeditations

In July, **Janet Bohren** encouraged us to reflect on *Trees: Summer’s Greatest Wonder*. She told the story of the life of sycamore tree that she planted in her yard years ago. Then she invited us to think about trees that have been meaningful in our lives. She asked us: Why do we plant trees in memory of people?

In September, **Mary E. Hunt** invited us to listen to *A Song Flung Up to Heaven* by Maya Angelou to begin our new meditation season at WATER. Mary, like Maya, focused on the hope necessary for survival and flourishing.

## 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.

## In the News

"Katie Geneva Cannon Incarnate" by **Mary E. Hunt** in *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 35.1 (2019), 109-111.

"Tending the Gifts of Deeper Communion" by **Diann L. Neu**. Spiritual Practice of the Week in Providence Associates weekly emails, September 24, 2019.

# Ritual: Harvesting Resilience

By Diann L. Neu

*Harvest* invites gratitude. **Gratitude** to you for working hard to increase justice. **Gratitude** to you for giving back to your communities. **Gratitude** to you for harvesting resilience in these dangerous and distressing historical times. **Resilience** is the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties. How is this happening in the current political conflict?

**Reading** from Polingaysi Qoyawayma (Elizabeth Q. White), *No Turning Back: A Hopi Indian Woman’s Struggle to Live in Two Worlds* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1964)

"I grind with gratitude for the richness of our harvest, not with cross feelings of working too hard. As I kneel at my grinding stone, I bow my head in prayer, thanking the great forces for provision. I have received much. I am willing to give much in return, for as I have taught you, there must always be a giving back for what one receives."

## Reflection | Discussion

Let us reflect on what we have heard and think about the ways in which we harvest resilience. As we share, let’s name a practice which produces resilience within ourselves and one that strengthens us to work for justice. Sharing.

## Blessing Apples and Cider

Let us savor our goodness and fortify ourselves to resist injustice in these troubled times.

*Hold the apple:* Blessed are you, Holy One of the Harvest, for giving us this apple. As we eat it, may we taste the sweetness of community and be grateful for all of the ways we cultivate resilience.

*Hold the cider:* Blessed are you, Holy One of the Harvest, for giving us this cider. As we drink this cup, may we enjoy the warmth, spice, and sweetness required to put our gratitude and resilience into action.

## Sending Forth

Let us go forth in peace with every breath of gratitude, every thought that harvests resilience, every word filled with grace and compassion, and every work channeled in love for justice. With the help of Divine Wisdom, let this be our life today and forever. Amen. Blessed be. May it be so.

## Take Action

- ~Take a walk outside and enjoy the beauty of the Earth.
- ~Think about ways to be a part of future elections to assure that justice-seeking candidates are chosen.

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# Butterflies for Immigrant Children in Detention Centers

In addition to lobbying and providing material needs for immigrants, WATER invites you, your group, your friends to make butterflies and give them to people in your area to bring about greater awareness, prayer, and advocacy for immigrant children. This call came from the SMWC Peace and Justice Club and the Sisters of Providence of St. Mary-of-the-Woods, IN.



When two young girls, Kaia Marbin and Lily Ellis in California realized that as of December 2018, 15,000 migrant children had been placed in US detention centers, six children had died there, the youngest was a four-month old baby, they knew that tragic situation called for action. They decided to make 15,000 butterflies to raise awareness of the inhumane treatment of each of these children. Why butterflies? Because they also migrate.

You can make 4-inch butterflies out of recycled paper, old magazines, and scraps of paper. We invite you to make some any way you like with whatever you have at hand and to distribute them to people in your area. Google how to make paper butterflies: <https://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Paper-Butterfly>

If you make a significant number or get a school or youth group involved, send a photo, a number count, and information about the group to [waterstaff@waterwomensalliance.org](mailto:waterstaff@waterwomensalliance.org) and [dbutler@spsmw.org](mailto:dbutler@spsmw.org). We want people, especially children, to welcome immigrants.