Prayer for Justice and Healing

By Dianl L. Neu

(Sound a Chime)

Proclaim God of Many Names.

Spirit of All Creation.

Be with us now at this dangerous moment in history.

Response: In your mercy, grant justice and healing.

(Chime) Eternal Presence of the Divine Mothers. Gaia, Kwan Yin, Boddhi, Pachamama, Shechinah, Tara, Mary, the Black Madonna.

Ease our weariness, and angels, surround us with community.

Keep alive within us a world where difference is valued.

Response: In your mercy, grant justice and healing.

(Chime) Spirit of Peace.

Forgive us for our wounds, hurts, mistakes, and violent acts.

Save us from further terrorism and destruction.

So that children of all nations may grow up living in peace.

Response: In your mercy, grant justice and healing.

(Chime) Holy Wisdom of Our Ancestors. Eve, Sarah, Hagar, Miriam, Mary of Magdalae, Hildegard of Bingen, Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz, Mother Theodore Gurein, Saralyn Tubman, mystics, and sappy women.

Inspire us today to act boldly and justly to demand an end to violence.

Inspire us to resist the politics of division and hate.

Inspire us to bring compassion, bravery, and new life into the cordwood of emptiness.

Response: In your mercy, grant justice and healing.

(Chime) Ever-present Cosmic Healer.

Strengthen us to act today to speak truth to power, to save our democracy for the health and well-being of the nation, the world, the earth, the universe.

Strengthen us to heal from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Strengthen us to work for non-violence and global peace.

Response: In your mercy, grant justice and healing.

(Chime) Guardian of All Creation.

Guide the leaders of the United States and its allies.

For their healing to hear the cries of those most in need.

Strengthen them to act responsibly to bring peace and warfare to humankind.

So that all may have food, housing, jobs, medicine, equity, peace, respect, and dignity.

Response: In your mercy, grant justice and healing.

(Chime) Holy Truth: Justice and Compassion.

Inspire President, Joe Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, and leaders of other countries to guide their nations with courage and wisdom.

And unite us beyond bigotry, hatred, and division.

Keep our voices safe and protect each of us.

Keep us moving forward.

Response: In your mercy, grant justice and healing.

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Photo above: Kwan Yin, Chinese Goddess of Mercy, Compassion, Healing.

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

Feminist Liberation Theologians Network 2020 Meeting

By Mary E. Hunt

WATER convened the 24th working meeting of the Feminist Liberation Theologians’ Network (FLTN) by Zoom from the WATER office in Silver Spring, Maryland, USA, on Friday, November 20, 2020, 4-6 PM ET.

Mary E. Hunt and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenzie co-chaired the session on “Feminist Liberation Theologies on the Ground: Acting When We Are in extremis.” The Women’s Caucus of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature (AAR/SBL) collaborated.

More than ninety participants from twelve countries and more than sixteen U.S. states gathered at a pivotal time in world history. Many expressed appreciation for the opportunity to be together, especially since the usual in-person meeting at the AAR/SBL was impossible. Technically it made possible for people who have never been to an FLTN meeting before.

Four speakers shared their insights:

Rita Nakashima Brock, a theologian who works with Volunteers of America, spoke on the dangers of a society not recovering from latent moral injury—when your life system collapses because of a moral failure—yours or someone else’s.

Without a recovery process, it is easy to slide into toxic anger, despair, and cynicism. Societal moral injuries include the pandemic, climate-change-induced disasters, the murder of George Floyd and “torturing” of systemic racism, and the shattering of trust in institutions.

Mary Condren, a theologian who works with Women Spirit Ireland in Dublin, offered hope. She critiqued the theology of salvation and urged embracing both the indigenous traditions of Ireland and a theology of mercy. First steps include reframing and renaming of words: from “alter” to “earthborn,” “blood of sacrifice” to “dew of mercy” “sacred to holy,” and “Godness and monothism to “Callesch: The Veiled or Mysterious One.”

Mónica Maher, a minister, Buddhist teacher, peace and justice worker, and activist based in Quito, Ecuador (and first WATER intern) narrated the work her community has been doing in the wake of the pandemic and Hurricane Ela and Lota. She focused on two apocalyptic themes: salvation and imagination, to answer the question, “What have feminist liberation theologies to offer in such a context of extremis?”

Mónica shared stories of neighbors saving neighbors, illustrating the slogan, “Only the people, save the people.”

Kathleen McPhillips, a sociologist of religion at the University of Newcastle in Australia took up the term “apocalypsis,” to describe the wildfires, made worse by climate change, that ravaged Australia from June 2019 to May 2020. These fires destroyed 46 million acres; almost 500 people died as either a direct or indirect result. Thankful, when the pandemic came to Australia, the government took it seriously, and the public as a collective worked together to mitigate the impact with a state-wide government shut-down, which, disrupting life, has lessened the virus’ impact in comparison to the individualistic approach in the United States.

A video of this event can be found at www.watersonomensalliance.org/feminist-liberation-theologies-network. It contains the presentations in full.

The session concluded with discussion of next steps, including next year’s meeting which will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the FLTN. It is scheduled for Friday, November 19, 2021, 4-6 PM, in San Antonio, Texas where the AAR/SBL is scheduled to convene. Stay tuned as much can change between now and then, and we may add another meeting mid-year.

© 2021 Mary E. Hunt is Co-founder and Co-director of Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER), hungar@msn.com

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 and who have changed the theoretical and political base 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 us, visit www.waterwomenonsalliance.org.

Mary E. Hunt, Dianl L. Neu Co-directors | Anaí Sandt Martin Staff Associate | Emily Neufeldt Newsletter Staff | Joe Scihito and Cheryl Nichols Volunteers

WATER is a 501c3 organization. All donations are tax deductible. We thank you for your support. © 2021 Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual.

Please note: Due to the pandemic and delayed postal service, we could not bring out WATERwheel Vol 28.4 by the end of 2020, so we are not publishing that issue. We are starting the new year on schedule with this issue, Vol 29.1.
Patricia Horsley: In Memory of Her 16 July 1930 – 28 January 2021

The Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER) convened two days of events to commemorate the life of a long-time leader and friend of WATER, Patricia Horsley. Horsley passed away on January 28, 2021, leaving a legacy of commitment to justice, equality, and peace. WATER mourned the loss of its dear friend Patricia Horsley in Sydney, Australia. She understood and appreciated WATER for decades, supporting from afar as the world became smaller and more just because of her active love.

Patricia grew up on the land she and her family had tended for generations, reverencing the people and customs that are native to it. She trained as an architect with a deep appreciation for beauty and function. She travelled the world as an Australian with a commitment to global citizenship. She never stopped learning or growing. Her legacy was an alma mater of the Sacred Heart schools and rarely went anywhere that she did not visit those people and institutions.

Her visits to WATER were the stuff of legend—the 4th of July when she arrived wearing an apron of American flags with two pouches for bottles of Australian Merlot; the chili over tea and Trouble & Strife; the many times she came back from her explorations of Washington, DC; the visits to the Rachel Carson House and the Washington National Cathedral where Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan are buried. She was fascinated with all things trains, including the Silver Spring station that was eventually renovated.

WATER extends its sympathy to the Horsley Family on the loss of a beloved elder. We treasure the decades of thoughtful letters, wonderful phone calls, generous financial support, and deep sharing of ideas. Patricia was truly a person who followed the Gospel exhortation to “go and make friends in all nations.” (Matthew 28:19-20). We miss her mightily. May she rest in peace.

In November, Christine Schenk, CSJ, and Theresa Kane, RSM, discussed Kane’s life as written in Christine’s book To Speak the Truth in Love: The Biography of Theresa Kane, RSM. It was an instructive and inspiring hour, as well as a time of reunion and reminiscing.

In December, Kendra Weddell and Jann Aldridge-Clanton shared about their book Building Bridges: Lethé Dawson Sconzoni and Friends. Many stories arose both from the presentation and during the open conversation that followed, shedding light on the complexities of evangelical feminism and the wonderful life and work of Lethé Sconzoni.

In January, Phyllis Zagano gave a rich synopsis of apostles’ work for women on her book Women Icons of Christ. An expert on and lover of the papacy, she is a voice for women in the Roman Catholic Church. Her sharing was followed by an informative discussion of the implications of women imaging Christ.

In November, Elaine Wilusz (England), Sylvia Marcos (Mexico), and Charlotte Lim (Singapore), joined our conversation on “A Global Kaleidoscope: Looking Forward.” Our speakers shared how things look from their vantage points dealing with Covid, Brexit, social and economic upheaval, and more, providing new perspectives on the globe’s current context.

In December, Mary E. Hunt, Elizabeth Ursic, and Diann L. Neu created a time for reflection on “The Gifts of 2020: A Celebratory Assessment.”

With the help of music, litany, and small group discussion, we named the blessings we have found in the year and the challenges, allowing us to move into 2021 with a fresh slate.

In January, following the events of January 6 at the US Capitol, we held an impromptu tea to provide “A Time to Talk and Listen,” led by Mary E. Hunt and Diann L. Neu. This space allowed us to gather, converse, and pray during a time of much unease.

Also in January, Mary Condron guided us to “Prepare to Celebrate the Festival of Brigit.” She shared the music, rituals, and symbolism that surrounds the Festival of Brigit along with resources for how to celebrate this Irish tradition of welcoming winter turning to spring.

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Winter WATER Program Highlights By Anali North Martin
You can find audio, notes, and scripts of our programs at www.waternomensalliance.org. Register for upcoming events on our website or email waterstaff@ghersi.com. All programs are now Zoom.

WATERMeditations
In November, Cynthia Tootle shared “The All-Knowing and Ever-Present Goddess: Psalm 139 Womanized.” We contemplated collectively the way various religious traditions promote female diversity, looking inward at the divine and ourselves.

In December, Anali North Martin reflected on “The Warmth of the Sun,” using Mary Oliver’s poem, “The Sun.” We gathered our thoughts around the poem’s themes of power, presence, possessions, and place, finding both comfort and warming in the warming of the sun.

In January, Mary Galeone, RSM, led a session pondering Mary Angela’s poem “On the Pulse of Morning” from where we were as individuals, as a nation, and as a planet, especially in the shadow of the January 6 insurrection on the U.S. Capitol. It was a much-needed and appreciated time to reflect on what we saw and what we needed to see.

WATERtalks
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WATERrituals
In November, Diann L. Neu and Anali North Martin guided participants through a reflective ritual entitled “Deep Peace of the Changing Seasons to You.” We prayed for those affected by the transitions, giving thanks for past insights, looking at what grounds us as we change, and remembering our political ancestors, family, friends, and colleagues in prayer.

In December, Diann L. Neu and Anali North Martin set about “Telling Lover’s Story for World A-Dis-Day.” With COVID-19 as our current backdrop, we prayed for those affected by both health crises, and reminded ourselves through the lighting of candles to respond with love and compassion in the face of stigma, ignorance, and incomprehensible loss.

In January, Diann L. Neu and Anali North Martin offered up “A Cup of Blessings for the New Year.” On this eve of the U.S. Inauguration, we reflected on endings and beginnings and recognized our needs, our gratitude, and our gifts that we could give to others.

WATERreaffirms: Commitment to Democracy
January 7, 2021
The Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER) condemn attacks on democratic institutions and the people who work within them. We recognize that the strength and beauty of our political system is that all people are equal with rights and responsibilities under the law. No one is without rights; no one is exempt from responsibilities. We reaffirm our commitment to democracy.

On January 6, 2021, the United States of America suffered a body blow to our democracy at the hands of Trump-inspired insurrectionists. Indelible images document a violent effort to replace the rule of law with the rule of white supremacists bent on perpetuating their privilege and power despite clear election results. This event, the culmination of years of divisive tactics, is a stark reminder that democracy is only as strong as its people. Fortunately, many people, including first responders, journalists, and congressional workers, showed their strength for which we are grateful.

Non-violent social change is part of our national heritage, bolstered by many religious traditions. What happened on January 6, 2021 was the opposite: the kind of malicious madness designed to upend social institutions, frighten the populace, and cement the status quo. It did not work. That this violence took place during the height of the ravaging Covid pandemic only heightens risk and renders the acts even sinelier.

The U.S. Congress was back in action scant hours after law-breaking individuals invaded their chambers, forcibly members, and put bullet holes in the walls, smashed windows, ransacked offices, and left four people dead. WATER applauds the courage of elected officials and their staffs who finished their appointed task of certifying the results of a legitimate election. That is how democracy works. Americans will tolerate nothing less moving forward.

We thank our many friends and colleagues, especially those from around the world, who have expressed their solidarity and good wishes for our well-being. WATER is more determined than ever to create spaces and ideas, relationships and projects emanating from feminist religious commitments that encourage intersectional justice and foster global peace. As we join our efforts with those of so many people of good will, we are deeply hopeful for brighter days ahead.

In solidarity,
Mary E. Hunt and Diann L. Neu
WATER Co-founders and Co-directors

Nickie Valdez, Presente! 10 September 1940 – 25 December 2020
WATER joins the many friends and colleagues who mourn the death and celebrate the life of Nickie Valdez who passed away at her San Antonio home on Christmas Day. Nickie was co-founder and president of Dignity San Antonio for which she and her longtime spouse Deb Myers were mainstays. Nickie was widely regarded as an LGBTQ pioneer, a tireless advocate for justice and social equality for women, people of color, and others who are marginalized.

“Her whole call was to help people recognize that they were created in the image and likeness of God, and God loved them just as they are created,” said Myers. “She and Deb took on too many people into their homes, under their wings, just mentoring them, nurturing them one by one. She definitely saved lives,” said Marianne Duddy-Burke, Executive Director of DignityUSA.

For WATER, she is an example of a woman of faith despite the barriers and rejection of a patriarchal church. With her small stature, she embodied the strength of truth and honesty. When she worked, she moved the world as it should be, not as it is. We take inspiration from her life with gratitude.

Mary E. Hunt greeting Nickie after she introduced Mary at the 3rd Dignity Convention in Chicago.