

Plans for 2021 During the Pandemic

WATER begins the New Year with profound HOPE that change is on the horizon for renewed energy and forward motion toward justice. We have been busier than ever during this Covid-19 pandemic. Numbers of people at programs have risen; there is more diversity, especially international, because of Zoom. We have lost some dear friends; we continue in memory of them and with your energy.

We added the now-popular WATER*teas* at the beginning of the pandemic as a hybrid program including spiritual and intellectual components. Staff are in the office Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, wearing masks and practicing social distancing. We are working from home on Mondays and Fridays, and Zooming all over the world morning, noon, and night!

This season we have learned patience, flexibility, and creativity. We are accepting challenges as offered, most recently from some students in California who want to collaborate with WATER by doing service work virtually as part of their feminist theology classes. Stay tuned! We have no easy answers or guarantees, but WATER is nimble enough to be able to respond, and open enough to know that change is a permanent dynamic we can count on.

We also count on and are grateful for you and your support in these challenging times. We offer our programs without charge to all who come, confident that if we share, among us there is enough. Thank you for sharing your financial support to make WATER available for everyone.

Your Gifts Bring Hope and Challenge to WATER

Photo above, from top to bottom and left to right: Diann L. Neu and Mary E. Hunt with colleagues who were former WATER interns: Laura Carr-Pries '20 and Cindy Lapp '95, Clarafrancie Cromer-Sowers '11-12 and Techika Rhodes '19-20, and Anali North Martin '20-21.

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).



Prayer for Justice and Healing By Diann L. Neu

(Sound a Chime)  
Provident 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, Brigit, Pachamama, Shechinah, Tara, Mary, the Black Madonna, Ease our fears, anxieties, and angers; 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 wars, wounds, hurts, misdeeds, 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 Magdala, Hildegard of Bingen, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Mother Theodore Guerin, Harriet Tubman, mystics, saints, and uppity 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 coldness of empire.  
**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 planet, the universe.  
Strengthen us to heal from the Covid-19 pandemic.  
Strengthen us to work for non-violent social change 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;  
Soften their hearts to hear the cries of those most in need.  
Strengthen them to act responsibly to bring peace and welfare 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 divisions.  
Keep our leaders safe and protect each of us.  
Keep us moving forward.  
**Response: In your mercy, grant justice and healing.**

© 2021 Diann L. Neu is Co-founder and Co-director of Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER), [dneu@hers.com](mailto:dneu@hers.com)

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



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 Fiorenza 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 liminal 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. Technology made it possible for people who have never been to an FLTN meeting before to join.

Four speakers shared their insights:  
**Rita Nakashima Brock**, a theologian who works with Volunteers of American, spoke on the dangers of a society not recovering from latent moral injury –“when your love 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 “unveiling” 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 sacrifice and urged recuperating both the indigenous traditions of Ireland and a theology of mercy. First steps include reframing and renaming of words: from “altar” to “hearthstone,” “blood of sacrifice” to “dew of mercy,” “sacred” to “holy,” and “Goddess” and monotheism to “Cailleach: The Veiled or Mysterious One.”

**Mónica Maher**, a minister, Buddhist teacher, peace and justice worker, and ethicist based in Quito, Ecuador (and first WATER intern!) narrated the work her community has been doing in the wake of the pandemic and Hurricanes Eta 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 *in 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 “apocalypse,” to describe the wildfires, made worse/possible 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. Thankfully, 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, while 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.waterwomensalliance.org/feminist-liberation-theologians-network/](http://www.waterwomensalliance.org/feminist-liberation-theologians-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), [mhunt@hers.com](mailto:mhunt@hers.com)



# WATER Reaffirms Commitment to Democracy

January 7, 2021

The Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER) condemns 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 a 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 more sinister.

The U.S. Congress was back in action scant hours after law-breaking individuals invaded their chambers, forced members into hiding, put bullet holes in the walls, smashed windows, ransacked offices, and left four people dead. WATER applauds the resilience 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 their 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

# Patricia Horsley: In Memory of Her

16 July 1930 – 28 January 2021

WATER mourns the loss of our 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 have 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 was never a tourist but always eager to learn and to contribute her wisdom. Patricia was an alumna of the Religious 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 chats over tea and treats when she would come 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 our 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.



Mary E. Hunt greeting Nickie after she introduced Mary at the 2019 Dignity Convention in Chicago.

# 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 LGBTIQ 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 together took so 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. With her huge heart, she embraced the world as it should be, not as it is. We take inspiration from her life with gratitude.

# Winter WATER Program Highlights

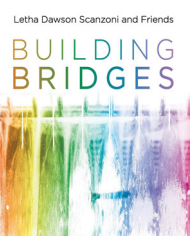
By Anali North Martin

You can find audio, notes, and scripts of our programs, at [www.waterwomensalliance.org](http://www.waterwomensalliance.org). Register for upcoming events on our website or email [waterstaff@hers.com](mailto:waterstaff@hers.com). All programs are over Zoom.

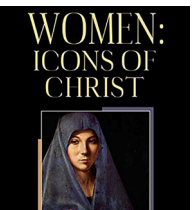
## WATERtalks



In November, **Christine Schenk, CSJ**, and **Theresa Kane, RSM**, discussed Kane's life as written in Chris' 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 Weddle** and **Jann Aldredge-Clanton** shared about their book *Building Bridges: Letha Dawson Scanzoni and Friends*. Many stories arose both from the presentation and during the robust conversation that followed, shedding light on the complexities of evangelical feminism and the wonderful life and work of Letha Scanzoni.



In January, **Phyllis Zagano** gave a rich synopsis of and background for her book *Women: Icons of Christ*. An expert on and tireless proponent for the diaconate for women in the Roman Catholic Church, her sharing was followed by an informative discussion of the implications of women imaging Christ.

## 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 focused on spiritual transitions, giving thanks for past insights, looking at what grounds us as we change, and remembering our deceased ancestors, family, friends, and colleagues in prayer.



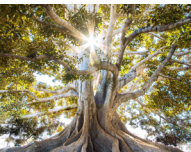
In December, **Diann L. Neu** and **Anali North Martin** set about "Telling Love's Story for World AIDS Day." With COVID-19 as our current backdrop, we prayed for those affected by both health crises, and reminded ourselves through the lighting of candles to respond with love and compassion in the face 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 the 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.



## WATERmeditations



In November, **Cynthia Tootle** shared "The All-Knowing and Ever-Present Goddess: Psalm 139 Womanized." We contemplated collectively the ways we are known by a female divinity, 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, pleasure, possessions, and place, finding both comfort and warning in the warming of the sun.



In January, **Mary Galeone, RSM**, led a session pondering Maya Angelou'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.

## WATERteas

In November, **Elaine Willis** (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 world and each other, 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 many unknowns.



Also in January, **Mary Condren** guided us to "Prepare to Celebrate the Festival of Brigit." She shared the music, ritual, and symbolism that surrounds the Festival of Brigit along with resources for how to celebrate this Irish tradition of heralding winter turning to spring.

