WATER appreciates more fully after a pandemic how much we rely on our colleagues in feminist studies in religion to shape the discourse and lead the way. As such, the questions and hopes of many women across the world who empower each other to make an impact through their religious beliefs.

-Eva Kenan

My time working with WATER was brief but meaningful to me. Mary, Diana, and Anali truly inspire me with their passion for the work that they do. I am so grateful for this opportunity to work behind the scenes for WATER, in researching grants and putting together social media and fundraising plans. I am glad I’ve been able to contribute to the WATER community.

-Marcella Hollero

I updated an article about the origins and growth of WATER, FaithTrust Institute, and the Resource Center for Women and Minority in the South. Through Mary’s insight and guidance, I have learned so much about the vast network of feminist theologians. The passion the women of WATER imbue into everything they do is palpable from hundreds of miles away.

-Hayley Burcher

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 Diana 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 us, visit www.waterwomensoalliance.org.

Mary E. Hunt, Diana L. Neu | Co-directors | Anali Martin | Staff Association | Emily Neufeld | Newsletter Staff | Joe Scirto and Cheryl Nichols | Volunteers

WATER is a 501(c)(3) organization. All donations are tax deductible. We thank you for your support. © 2021 Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual.
Blessing Same-Sex Couples by Diann L. Neu with Mary E. Hunt

The Vatican’s recent ban on same-sex blessings has caused many and varied responses worldwide in favor of such blessings. We, the WATER Community, rejoice in the love of all couples and in the abundant blessings which the Divine Creator showers on our world through them.

When people find one another as lifetime companions, they often want to gather family, friends, and colleagues to celebrate their good fortune. For some, their life partner is of the same sex or a non-binary person. They promise publicly to love as equal partners, cherish and respect one another, nurture each other’s personal and spiritual growth, create a family or community together, and work for a more just society.

Below are elements that could be used in a liturgy blessing a same-sex couple (or any couple for that matter), in holy unions, commitment ceremonies, and weddings. We invite you to use these pieces to design the liturgy you need. You can find the full script at www.waterrwomensalliance.org/blessing-same-sex-couples-liturgy/

Call to Gather

This sacred hour, we come together to witness this ceremony of love and commitment between N and N. Their love for one another, for each of us here, and for the broader community shows that love makes a difference in the world. Praising and affirming this love publicly is an act of courage. Thank you, N and N, for inviting us to witness and bless your love.

Our presence here for and with you is a sign of our support, our love, and our commitment to you as a couple. Feel the power of love today.

Opening Prayer

Source of All Being, Eternal Word, Spirit of Wisdom, Adonai, Gaia, Buddha, Yahweh, Vishnu, Allah, Wisdom Sophia, Cosmic Consciousness, Great Spirit, thank you for this day! Bless this occasion that brings us together to honor N and N. Bless what we do and say here to reflect the sacredness of love. Bless all creation through this sign of love shown in N and N.

Source of All Being, bless us on this day and always! Amen. Ashe. Let it be so.

Words of Reflection: “What’s Love Got to Do with It?” by Mary E. Hunt, excerpted. Full text can be found at www.waterrwomensalliance.org/blessing-same-sex-couples-liturgy/

On behalf of all of us gathered, let me thank you for inviting us to share in the joyfulness of your love.

Consenting in love is a generous thing to do. In your case, commitment is made even more difficult by loving at a time when some people still don’t understand that love can exist in many forms. Efforts to turn back legal marriage for all and trivializing same-sex love by the Vatican make it hard. Between those attitudes and the outcry of the Religious Right, it is amazing that you and other lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and non-binary Friends have chosen to trust your love, live it out, and more so, in this climate, to entrust it to the rest of us. Good for you!

Love is what brought you together for reasons you’ll never fully understand and no one has a right to expect you to explain... Love is not a political matter at base, nor only a private one. Rather, love is the very essence of ourselves in community, which some of you have found and touched and hope to deepen together...

Thank you for standing before us today, giving love two beautiful faces so that we may see it in ourselves, in one another, and in our God forever. Love is indeed a miracle, and you embody this miracle. Treasure it well all the days of your lives.

Exchange of Vows

We as a community are here to witness and bless the love of N and N. Come forward, N and N, to speak your blessing to one another. The couple face each other, join hands, and repeat in turn.

On this day, I give you my heart, and promise you that I will look deep within myself and treasure my individuality. I will love you, respect you, listen to you, and cherish you. I will share my life with you in plenty and in want, in sickness and in health. I will work with you to bring about justice for our community and the cosmos. Hand in hand, across oceans and over mountains, wherever our journey takes us. Together. Forever.

Closing Blessing

N and N, may your lives together be joyful and content, and may your love be as bright as the stars, as warm as the sun, as accepting as the ocean, and as enduring as the mountains.

May your heart hear more than words... listening to each other’s silences and exploring each other’s hopes. May you love one another, and each other, so that you may love yourselves into the hearts and lives of all those calling for justice, dignity, and love.

May you be blessed with wisdom to find the paths upon which you both may walk and with clear vision to keep sight of the grace that surrounds you.

May you continue to make your love clearly and truly a reflection of the infinite love that embraces us all.

And may you, N and N, be blessed in the name of the Source of Life who lives us into being, the Beloved who is the way of love, and the Spirit from whom burning love sets us free. Amen. Ashe. Let it be so.

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WATER Programs Highlights during the Pandemic

Our Alliance has proved itself truly international as we have connected via Zoom during the pandemic, with more than twenty countries represented. While our communities have been affected by Covid in different ways, we are able to gather across borders and time zones to share our experiences and enjoy each other’s virtual presence. Thank you to all who led and participated in these programs.

WATERtalks

In February, Colleen D. Hartung and Elizabeth Urciu spoke on the book, Claiming Notability for Women's Activists in Religion, an outcome of the “1000 Women in Religion” Wikipedia project. They emphasized the need for writing biographies of women in religion to reflect the substantial diversity in terms and increase representation.

In March, Heidi Neumark, Lutheran pastor in New York City, and author of Sanctuary Being Christan in the Water of Trump and Cindy Lapp, Memorial pastor in Hyattsville, Maryland, had a conversation about the challenges and rewards of dismantling white supremacy and staying spiritually healthy during Covid-19.

In April, the Rev. Dr. Irie Lynne Session, the Rev. Kamilla Hall, Sharp, and the Rev. Dr. Jann Aldredge-Clanton shared their experiences of the birth and development of the woman's faith community. The Gathering, outlined in their book The Gathering, A Unitarian Church: Origins, Stories, Sermons, and Liturgy.

In May, Naomi Goldenberg and Kathleen McPhilips, co-editors of The End of Religion Feminist Reappraisals of the Sacred, discussed how sexism oppressions is perpetuated by understanding how religious functions as a technology of contemporary statecraft.

WATERrituals

In February, Cheryl Nichols used “A Blessing of Angels,” John O’Donohue’s poem, to reflect on angels in their lives governing, healing, creating, and disrupting us.

In March, Mary E. Hunt introduced “Many Masks.” We contemplated masks in their ability to cover faces while revealing our political statements, fashion choices, emotions, compassion (or lack there-of) and prejudice, connecting us.

In April, Rosemary Ganley led us in “Accepting Divinism” as we considered the passage of time and the meaning of our lives, looking to the wisdom of Teilhard de Chardin and listening to the hymn “Ablessing With Me.”

In May, Virginia Day used the Virginia Woolf quote: “Arranged to discover poesy and see your way and live camera footage of osprey nests to reflect on what and how things “come our way.”

WATEReats

In February, feminist theologian, author, and social activist Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite discussed the false news of our current “Information Apocalypse” both technologically and our own participation in it.

In March, Rosemary B. Ganley, our own Canadian IRC, guided the group in “Finding Your Voice and Then Using It,” reflecting joyfully on her authorial journey, specifically her book Positive Community: Columns From The Chattanooga Examiner 1924-1928.

In April, Laura Carr-Pries (former WATER interim), Tammie Honore-Reaux, Damaris Gutierrez, and Blcqio Yim from the Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution lead us on “Growing Brave Spaces.” We explored our identities as a first step toward engaging in the difficult conversations of our lives with resolution.

In May, we look on the genre of film for “Let’s Go to the Movies.” Maria Suarez, Linda Piecyszyn, and Dolly Pomerleau started the conversation as a way to advocate, inform, and inspire