Ritual to Celebrate Women’s History Month
By Diann L. Neu

March is National Women’s History Month and March 8th is the celebration of International Women’s Day. This is a month to thank women for sharing their unique gifts with the world. It is a chance to become those women.

Bless Women Worldwide

In solidarity with women around the world, we bless the four elements and directions:
With you, Sisters of the South, we share the Fire of wisdom. (Light a candle.)
With you, Sisters of the East, we share the Air of inspiration. (Sound chimes.)
With you, Sisters of the North, we share the living soil of Earth. (Place flowers.)
With you, Sisters of the West, we share life-giving Water. (Pour water into a glass.)

Thanks to Women

Mbah Francois, Pakarist activist and youngest Nobel Prize laureate, for deflecting the Taliban and demanding that girls be allowed to receive an education. Thank you.

Qu Jin, Chinese feminist revolutionary executed in 1907, for fighting for the emancipation of women, and for starting your own feminist newspaper, China Women’s News. Thank you.

Claudette Cohin, Rosa Parks, and the brave women who sparked the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. Thank you.

Sudako Saseki, Japanese hijabushika "bomb-affected person" after Hiroshima, for folding one thousand origami cranes before your death, a symbol of the victims of nuclear warfare. Thank you.

Sally Ride, American engineer, physicist, and astronaut who became the first American woman and the third woman overall in space. In 1983, for showing the world, especially young girls, that women can reach for the stars and fly into space, Thank you.

Rigoberta Menchu Tum, Kiche’ political and human rights activist from Guatemala, for dedicating her life to publicizing the rights of Guatemala’s indigenous feminists and ethnic-cultural reconciliation, and for receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992. Thank you.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Nigerian novelist and author, for giving a definition of feminism for the 21st century in your book. We Should All Be Feminists. Thank you.

Mary Delly, American radical lesbian feminist philosopher and theologian, for challenging us to move beyond God the Father. Thank you.

HeLEN Keller, American author, political activist, and lecturer, for campaigning tirelessly on behalf of people who are physically challenged and for women’s suffrage, labor rights, socialism, and anti-warism. Thank you.

Wangari Maathai, Kenyan ecologist who won the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize, for your contribution to sustainable development, democracy, and peace to reverse African deforestation. Thank you.

Mothers, Grandmothers, and all who have nurtured in every family and country, for shaping generations with your inspiration. Thank you.

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.waterrwomensalliance.org.

Mary E. Hunt, Diann L. Neu, Co-directors | Anais North Martin | Tech Staff | Emily Neufeld | WATER@ed.hart | Joe Scinto and Cheryl Nichols | Volunteers

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Feminist Liberation Theologians’ Network: At 25 and Looking Ahead

By Mary E. Hunt

The 25th anniversary of the Network was a celebration of persistence against myriad odds. It had a festive feel, even on Zoom. In lieu of champagne, we had one another. If we had met in person with bubbles, some people would not have attended. To watch the meeting see: https://www.waterrwomensalliance.org/feminist-liberation-theologians-network/

Hosted by WATER and held in collaboration with the AAR/SBL Women’s Caucus, FLTN began with a land acknowledgement. The group reflected in silence on the many people across the world on whose lands we sit. More than 60 people attended the meeting more from a dozen countries including Germany, Australia, Ireland, Ecuador, the Philippines, Brazil, Canada, and the United States among others.

In 1995, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Mary E. Hunt convened a gathering of theologians and activists at the Women’s Ordination Conference’s meeting “Discipleship of Equals: Breaking Bread, Doing Justice.” The next year, 1996, Elisabeth and Mary offered an invitation to (1) bring U.S. Canadian people together, (2) link colleagues across racial-ethnic lines, (3) explore and connect with other such groups around the world, and (4) engage with colleagues from various religious traditions.

Twenty-five years later, we still have much work to do on those lofty goals. Yet, we rejoice in having produced very exciting sessions and brought many colleagues together. An estimated 1,250+ people (50 people on average at 25 meetings) have been involved, though some meetings have been bigger. Activist scholar Traci West of Drew University Theological School offered kind words about the Network and its leadership. She cited its “innovation, relevance, and capaciusness in a world context that too often shrinks, narrows, limits what we can know and imagine in relation to spiritual, intellectual, embodied, and political bonds of unfreedom.”

She called FLTN “intentionally transnational” moving beyond the U.S.-centric character of much American academic work. She insisted on including scholar activists from Africa. Black feminist work in religion is central to our concerns. She confirmed that FLTN has unabashedly “claimed space for centering the urgency of the political moment.” It is immersed in particularity. She talked about the repeated patterns that need deconstructing and how we create the tools to deconstruct class, race, and nation. Alliances can be fragile, superficial, and need more honest confrontation of differences.

Kathleen McNichol of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Newcastle in Australia spoke of FLTN as a networking community which has been helpful to her over the decades and that grounds her efforts to build similar community in her setting.

Her first FLTN meeting in Boston in 1999 was where she deepened a sense of belonging in the field. At the 2005 Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion gathering in Boston she introduced her colleague Lee Miena Skye, the first feminist indigenous scholar of religion in Australia, to her wider circle. Now women in Australia have their own network where they share their own work on their own terms.

Kath described FLTN as a warm and inviting if also challenging space. She called it a “deep root system traveling across expansive areas... a dynamic, moving, generous, safe space with multiple shoots across a range of projects and ideas” where activism on urgent issues by people in religious studies is the norm.

Eizane Nogué-Gosalvez of the Methodist Theological School in Ohio in the U.S. brought her work on intersecting decolonial and ecclesial perspectives to FLTN.

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Thank you! Gracias! Danke! XièXīè! Merci! Arigato!

Your Generous Gifts Bring Hope and Challenge to WATER

We count on and are grateful for you and your support, especially in these challenging times. You can give to WATER programs and collaboration available to our Alliance. People from more than twenty-five countries join our monthly programs through Zoom. Your checks, PayPal donations, monthly gifts, IRA distributions, bequests, and more are the engines that make WATER work. Keep them coming! If we share, together we have enough. Thank you!
The Disturbing Challenges of COVID
By Mary E. Hunt

These two Covid years have changed everything and nothing. Zoom is now a member of most families, a staple for most organizations. On line, virtual, digital, whatever we name it, the human community, and, in WATER’s case, global links, any way we can.

It is exhilarating to reflect on how far we have come in a short time to be able to beam each other up at will, see our faces, and share a cup of tea.

Still, what remains the same is deeply disturbing. Systemic racism, grinding poverty with food and water shortages, war, ecological disaster, and the就餐 sexism, transphobia, and queer dismissal are all products of greed and entitlement.

The ability to communicate even during lockdowns does not guarantee that anything will change if the same people talk with one another. Despite helping us feel connected (no small feat) it can create the illusion of greater equality than exists, of more solidarity than is operative but a first step.

We move ahead, developing plans for 2022 at WATER, and hoping to see the pandemic in the rearview mirror soon. More important, we remain on the lookout for those along the way who are marginalized by the powerful. They, and especially their children, retain the widest claims on our resources until we dismantle the structures that oppress before, during, and after Covid.