



Top left: WATER Interns: (seated l to r) Patrice Rupp and Brooke Andrews, (standing l to r) Catherine Hunt-Neu and Hannah Dorfman. **Middle left:** WATER staff Pamala Miller with theologian Carter Heyward. **Middle right:** WATER's Patrice Rupp hears a speech from Vice President Kamala Harris at Howard University. **Top right:** WATER staff Patrice Rupp (right) with two other Brethren Volunteers, Clara Grabenhorst and Silas Seil, working on the funding letter mailing. **Bottom right:** Former Intern Hannah Dorfman playing a private concert at the WATER Office. **Bottom left:** WATER celebrates Joe Scinto's 90th birthday with Cynthia Lapp (left) and his two daughters Kathy (right) and Tania Scinto.

water wheel

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

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"Now More Than Ever" By Mary E. Hunt

WATER celebrates forty years of study, spirituality, and solidarity. Just as we took the temperature of the world in 1983 when we started, now is a good interval to reflect on this moment and how we approach the future.

Latanay Mapp Frett, President and CEO of the Global Fund for Women, took the words out of my mouth in the subtitle to her book *The Everyday Feminist: Driving Movements We Need Now More Than Ever*. WATER is part of one such movement of feminist studies in religion and action broadly construed. Now, more than ever, the work of changing minds and hearts is a powerful part of any political efforts.

In 1983, Ronald Reagan's administration invaded Grenada. The U.S. sent Cruise missiles to the British Greenham Common Air Force Base. Mobile phones began to proliferate. Cabbage Patch Dolls were popular. Gas was 96 cents per gallon. Average rents were \$335 per month. Terrible as some of the 80's were, they were simpler times. Still, Reaganomics and the saber rattling of the day sent some of our stalwart Washington, DC friends and colleagues to work locally rather than on Capitol Hill. We all understood, but little did we know what was ahead.

2023 offers breathtaking, dizzying challenges with little hope. Post-Covid, there are wars in Ukraine, South Sudan, and other civil unrests for which non-violence makes the most sense. Gun violence in the U.S. is as common as apple pie, with mass shootings so frequent that many are injured to them. A twice impeached former president and presidential candidate has been found guilty of one crime and will soon go on trial for another, and then another. What does it take to persuade the unpersuadable?

Nothing is simple today. Racism kills. Small children are pawns in immigration struggles. Climate change is denied only by the most recalcitrant. Women's reproductive health and trans rights are barometers of a steadily failing web of care and a relentless attack on dignity, liberties, and human rights. Artificial Intelligence will not save us from ourselves.

WATER and sibling groups persist despite the uphill struggle to make sense, more important, to make change. The speed with which wealth accumulates for the endowed is matched only by the speed with which those in need are crushed by forces they cannot control. Their suffering—refugees, children without childhoods, people priced out of medical care—becomes unbearable to observe.

But bearing it is just what our various religious and humanist traditions require of us, bearing so that we may act. Feminist insights into the common fabric of life offer strength and strategies. After all, feminists have advocated for interstructural work and interreligious collaboration for decades. If we do not denounce white Christian nationalism and Islamophobia who will?

That is why as WATER moves into our next decade, come what may, we are confident that we are doing what needs doing: educating, upholding, networking, and creating the new out of which we hope will come more effective tools for change.

Thank you for being part of the WATER Alliance. ■

© 2023 Mary E. Hunt is Co-founder and Co-director of Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER), mhunt@hers.com

Thank you! Gracias! Danke! XièXiè! Merci! Arigato! You are WATER! Your Generous Gifts Bring Hope and Challenge!

You make WATER programs and collaboration available to our Alliance. People from more than twenty countries join our monthly programs through Zoom. Your checks, PayPal donations, monthly gifts, IRA distributions, stocks, bequests, and more are the engines that make WATER run. Keep them coming as we celebrate our 40th Anniversary! We believe that if we share, together we have enough. *Thank you!*

Become a WATERgem! Give Every Month.

Join our monthly giving program and provide a steady stream of support for people who need WATER. This convenient way to give ensures sustaining support for WATER's life-giving programs. Donate at a level that is possible for you each month (\$10, \$25, \$50, \$100, or more) through our secure PayPal account. Click "Donate" on WATER's website at www.waterwomensalliance.org for more information.



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Who We Are

WATER is a global interreligious network, a non-profit educational center and public charity, a spiritual space, a center for dialogue on feminism, faith, and justice. We connect activists, religious leaders, students, scholars, and allies who are using feminist 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 forty 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.

Mary E. Hunt, Diann L. Neu: Co-directors | Pamella Miller, Patrice Rupp, Brooke Andrews: Staff Associates | Emily Neufeld, Anali North Martin: Communications | Joe Scinto, Cheryl Nichols, and Charlotte Cook: Volunteers

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Rest in Justice, Dr. Teresia Mbari Hinga, Kenyan Catholic Feminist Theologian

WATER mourns the passing of Dr. Teresia Mbari Hinga, a founding member of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. She was Associate Professor of Religion at Santa Clara University, California, after teaching for many years at DePaul University, Chicago, and Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya. She was a regular participant in WATER's Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network and a stalwart member of the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature's Women's Caucus.

Her work spanned not only two continents, but many themes including ecofeminism, postcolonialism, and HIV/AIDS. Like her friend and colleague Rosemary Radford Ruether, she will long be remembered as a wonderful person as well as a strong scholar, a kind professor as well as a principled activist. Long may her memory inspire us.

Prayer for a World Undone by Diann L. Neu

When gun owners kill, again and again,

We cry out with You, Creator, stop the violence, and we work for responsible gun ownership.

When the risk of nuclear war threatens and intimidates the world,

We scream NO with You, Divine Mercy, and advocate for nuclear disarmament.

When sexual and reproductive health care, especially birth control and abortion, are threatened,

We join with You, Compassionate Creator, to encourage people to listen to their own consciences and make important choices.

When divisions in Congress escalate political violence,

We unite with You, Witness to Justice, and reinforce democracy.

When white supremacy culture perpetuates racism,

We breathe with You, Spirit of Community, and create a culture of equity and inclusion.

When graduates change their tassels and promise to make their positive imprint on the world,

Resilience and hope endure.

When leaders listen and awaken in us a renewed commitment to care for Earth, the unhoused, and those most in need,

Resilience and hope endure.

When LGBTQIA people, especially trans people of color, are welcomed and affirmed,

Resilience and hope endure.

When hurting souls and broken hearts find a compassionate listener,

Resilience and hope endure.

When we join our energies for justice,

Resilience and hope endure.

© 2023 Diann L. Neu is Co-founder and Co-director of Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER), dneu@hers.com

Mary E. Hunt and Diann L. Neu Receive the Mary Magdalene Award 2023 by Judy Heffernan of SEPAWOC

Sixteen years ago, gathered around a table, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Women's Ordination Conference (SEPAWOC) Core Committee happily agreed to the grand idea that every year at our Holy Thursday Witness we would honor and celebrate people of courage who proclaim with their lives that equality and justice matter.

This year we celebrated Mary E. Hunt, MTS, M.Div, PhD and Diann L. Neu. D.Min, M.Div, STM, MSW and LMSW. I honor every letter after their names because Mary and Diann have lived their lives sharing with us the depth and breadth of their education with wisdom, insight, clarity, vision and hope.

They have done all this with deep respect for each of us, honoring all the beautiful, intertwining circles of companions dedicated to this great work of equality and justice.

Very early in WOC's living history, I was deeply touched, moved and inspired to be with Mary and Diann at wondrous National WOC gatherings. Mary was our theologian and guide, having the ability to make great truth clear and concrete for us; Mary not only spoke to us, she also took time to listen. Diann was our liturgist and guide, celebrating our lived experience as holy, each of us honored and respected for who we were, are and would be, praying, sharing, singing, dancing, gathering around a table.

In SepaWOC's living history, we sponsored a gathering of sharing together about what we were being called to do on our journey together—as our mission statement proclaims—for justice, equality and full partnership in ministry and for the transformation of a church structure which uses gender rather than gifts as its criterion for ministry. We took a chance and invited Diann and Mary to be our workshop leaders—and to our delight they said yes! What I remember most about that day is that Diann and Mary were really happy to be with us and from that day forward they would be united in a special way with SepaWOC.

This Holy Thursday we also celebrated that forty years ago Mary and Diann gathered thirteen women from various faith backgrounds around a table and they committed to creating a place where women's religious needs could be met and women's creativity nurtured—and WATER (Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual) was born!

WATER is an ever-growing network of religious feminists around the world who are committed to empowerment, justice, peace, inclusive religious communities and an egalitarian future. WATER focuses on our power, in collaboration with worldwide justice networks, to create social and religious change and to put the renewable moral energy of faith in the service of transforming an increasingly unjust and fragile world. (And as Diann would pray "Let it be so!")

So, let's celebrate Mary, Diann, and WATER. Celebrate the power of our shared history, gathering together around a table on Holy Thursday and every day. Alleluia!

WATER Essay Contest Winners 2022-2023

WATER delights in announcing the winners of the first WATER Essay Contest in the Style of Rosemary Ganley, influential journalist and celebrated feminist, "Feminists Change the World 650 Words at a Time."

The winners (in alphabetical order):

Mary Dyer, "Rock, Paper, Scissors: Love Letter from Kenya"

Diana Ensign, "How Our Clothing Choices Can Help the Earth"

Bernadine Lanot, "How the Feminine God Subverts the Patriarchal Gaze and Rebuilds a Home in One Woman's Body"

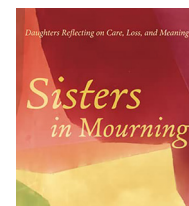
They each received a prize of \$650 for their articles. Congratulations! Second annual contest will commence soon. Read their essays at www.waterwomensalliance.org on the home page.



Program Highlights for January-April 2023

Thank you to all who led and participated in these Zoom programs. We had people from more than 20 countries join us! You can find video, audio, and notes at www.waterwomensalliance.org under Programs.

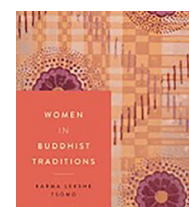
WATERtalks



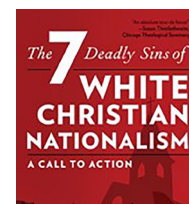
In January, we gathered with Su Yon Park and Mychal B. Spring to learn about the book they edited, *Sisters in Mourning: Daughters Reflecting on Care, Loss, and Meaning*. They, along with contributors Linda Jaramillo and Kathleen Talvacchia, spoke about caring for and grieving the loss of their mothers. A book to share.



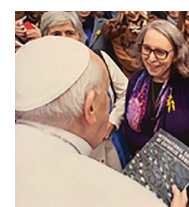
Jeanette Stokes, an ordained Presbyterian minister who is frank about the boringly outdated beliefs so many people still cling to out of habit, joined us in February to talk about her book, *Making the Road As We Go*. The work of the Resource Center for Women and Ministry in the South, which she founded and directs, reflects her deepest commitments to creating a just and sustainable world. We are honored to work with her.



In March on International Women's Day, Karma Lekshe Tsomo, a specialist in Buddhist studies, spoke about her important book, *Women in Buddhist Traditions*. The message of this marvelous presentation and conversation was clear: Buddhism has had many expressions in many places over 2500 years. Patriarchal social conditions play a large role in how it is shaped. Contemporary women are putting their own stamp on it with Karma Lekshe Tsomo showing the way.



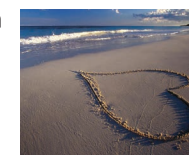
In April, Carter Heyward, theologian/priest/activist, spoke about her recently published book, *The Seven Deadly Sins of White Christian Nationalism: A Call to Action*. She illuminated the Christian roots of racist patriarchy and strategies for eradicating them. This is very useful feminist liberation theology.



Our May WATERtalk was the Mid-Year Meeting of the Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network. Theo-ethicist Monica Maher reported on the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at the UN and on collaborating with Kichwa women in Ecuador in their new School of Indigenous Medicine. The voices of indigenous women were the basis of her report. Tracy McEwan, Australian feminist theologian, summarized the *International Survey of Catholic Women* of 17,200 Catholic women worldwide. She and University of Newcastle colleague Kathleen McPhillips found concrete data about Catholic women's views on a patriarchal church.

WATER and Women of Dignity Collaboration

In February, our liturgy with WATER and Women of Dignity opened our hearts to "Love, Love, and More Love: A Valentine for YOU Every Day!" We focused on loving ourselves, loving others, loving the world, and loving justice.



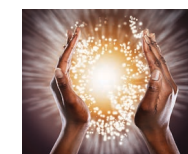
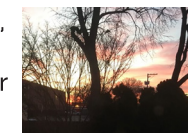
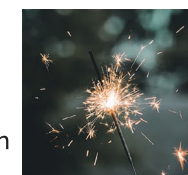
WATERmeditations

In January, Virginia Day, palliative care chaplain and spiritual director, invited us to meditate on "A Blessing for the New Year." She launched us into the New Year with quiet and hope, a forward-looking approach as we entered 2023 in communal contemplation.

In February, Cheryl Nichols, teacher and activist, invited us to meditate on "Welcoming the Morning Light." She offered a reflection using her own photo and a poem by Mary Oliver.

In March, Cynthia Tootle, associate minister, Takoma Metaphysical Chapel, introduced the concept of *Sending Healing Energies*. She used the video "Sending You Light" by Melanie Demore performed with Julie Wolf.

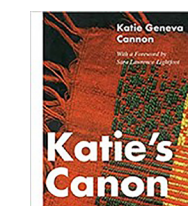
In April, Rosemary Ganley, Canadian writer/activist invited us to reflect on "Everyday Prophets." She rehabilitated the word "prophet" so that we can wear it with pride. It is not about predicting the future, but about pointing to the truth and acting to help here and now. We named some prophets, past, and present.



WATERrituals with Diann L. Neu and the WATER Community



In January, Human Trafficking month, our ritual was "Standing Against Injustice Empowers the Marginalized." We acknowledged the lives of those traumatized by human trafficking, showed our support for survivors, and rallied to fight to end slavery of all kinds. We prayed for healing for families who are missing loved ones in human trafficking and for survivors as they work to reclaim themselves, their dignity, their freedom, and their dreams.



During Black History Month in February, and anticipating Women's History Month in March, we gathered to celebrate "Womanist Ways of Knowing." We lifted up the memories, life stories, and contributions of Womanist theologians and ministers who are on the forefront of struggles for liberation. Together we resist racial, gender, and class discrimination and all forms of social oppression in order to make justice, equity, and peace.



In March, "Honoring World Water Day," we celebrated the Spring Equinox and marked the 30th anniversary of World Water Day. We gathered for a ritual to restore our personal, collective, and international balance. We called forth a blessing of peace from the spirits of the universe so that wars over water will cease.



In April, in our Earth Day ritual, Invest in Our Planet, we praised Providence for our planet home, and joined one another in action for climate change and global warming that threaten Earth.

