

WATER Essay Contest 2024

In the Style of Rosemary Ganley "Feminists Change the World" 650 Words at a Time"

Feminist work in religion and social change is accomplished in many ways, not least of which is through writing. Enter WATER's Essay Contest to see how it is done a la Rosemary Ganley, a Peterborough, Ontario feminist activist and writer whose columns in *The Peterborough Examiner* reach a wide audience and make waves.

Up to three writers will receive \$650 each for their successful essays.

For contest background, guidelines, and information on submissions see:
www.waterwomensalliance.org/water-essay-contest/

Submit your essay today to waterstaff@hers.com by March 15, 2024! If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Mary E. Hunt, mhunt@hers.com.



Special 40th Anniversary Edition



Top, Clockwise, L to R: Diann L. Neu and Mary E. Hunt; Lisa Lauterbach and Emily Neufeld; Anali North Martin; Techika Rhodes, Pamella Miller, and Clarafrancie Cromer-Sowers.



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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-founders and Co-directors | Pamella Miller, Lisa Lauterbach, Brooke Andrews: Staff Associates | Emily Neufeld, Anali North Martin: Communications | Clarafrancie Cromer Sowers: Wesley Theological Seminary Mentor | Joe Scinto, Cheryl Nichols: Volunteers

WATER is a 501(c)3 organization. All donations are tax deductible. We thank you for your support.

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Celebrate WATER 40 Years & Forward! *By Mary E. Hunt*

Forty years have flown by since thirteen diverse women – theologians, ministers, nuns, students, spiritual seekers, justice activists, religious leaders – gathered and created a place where the needs of women and marginalized people could be addressed and met using the resources of feminist work in religion.

WATER was born in 1983, and has been growing and deepening since then. It is now one of the key places feminists in religion look to for leadership in theology, ethics, and ritual.

You, our colleagues, donors, friends, and companions make our vital work happen. Vibrant interns, visiting scholars, staff associates, volunteers, and co-directors give shape and spirit to our mission.

The results of our collaborations are many and multiplying. For 40 years, we have responded to the needs of our alliance, and designed and offered countless programs, liturgies, and meditations. We have sponsored 25+ annual meetings of the Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network. We have worked on panels, boards, and committees with people from

dozens of countries and many religious traditions. We have consulted widely, written a lot, and counseled many. We have brought the rich resources of feminist studies in religion to the work of personal and social change.

We have not brought about world peace, figured out a cure for the common cold, nor gotten ahead of Artificial Intelligence. But WATER stands firmly in the long herstory of women scholars/activists, ministers of many stripes, and community-minded global citizens who back up their hopes with actions and their faith with fun.

We thank everyone as we imagine that WATER's best days are ahead. We believe that when we share, among us there is enough. So far, it has been. With your continued involvement it will be. ■



© 2024 Mary E. Hunt is Co-founder and Co-director of Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER), mhunt@hers.com

Reset the Moral Compass *By Mary E. Hunt*

The recurring question of the age is how did the U.S. get into this mess? What so failed in our moral imaginations that we face wars on several fronts, hunger unto famine, homelessness and poverty, climate disasters worldwide? How did easy access to guns and their terror shape our communities with a general breakdown of social order from the turnstile jumpers to the drug store thieves as far as the urban eye can see?

The assault on U.S. women's reproductive justice, racism and ethnic oppressions are too numerous to mention. Even if artificial intelligence is conscious, it does not have a conscience. But we do, and only we can refocus the moral compass going forward.

I pose this challenge as one way to grapple with the morass of the moment. It is hard to recall a time when so many conflicts and brutalities converged. Or, perhaps it is the endless onslaught of news made possible by contemporary technology that drives some people to turn away from realities that try our souls. Babies killed in war, women raped in battle, families terrorized, people with disabilities left to fend for themselves all overwhelm even the strongest among us. But turning away is not a moral option.

I pretend no easy answers. But I am persuaded that we need a wholesale reset going forward, a 'hard reset' to soften our hearts and sharpen our minds. If we are to emerge from the unspeakable violence that has become normative, we need to change from the ground up. If we are to stem the tide of gratuitous cruelty that issues from persons, parties, and organizations seeking profit and power, we have to dig deeply into our moral traditions for resources.

We at WATER strive to be part of this reset. We have tried to do justice over 40 years. We continue to offer programs, publications, and collaborations that bolster the minds and spirits of people whose pooled efforts, Spirit willing, will move us in the direction of deep, lasting peace. Such work is our best hope.



WATERritual: Toasting WATER's 40th Anniversary *By Diann L. Neu*

Pour yourself a glass of WATER. With glasses in our hands (it is indeed *good luck* to toast with WATER!), we toast YOU for 40 years together of propelling the resistance, persistence, and insistence of religious feminists. *Thank you!*

Drink to our faithful donors, starting with the Loretto Community who gave us our first grant, and the many others like you who give WATER sustaining life. *Cheers!*

Toast our vibrant WATER Staff and colleagues for creative programs, projects, rituals, collaboration, networking, and publications. *Sláinte!*

Connect with our vital Alliance in more than 43 countries who are using feminist values to make a difference in the world. *Skål!*

Give thanks for the more than 105 Interns who have graced WATER with their time and justice efforts, and the many visiting scholars, ministers, and activists who have written theses, articles, sermons, and books here at WATER. *לחיים L'chaim!*

Raise a glass (she preferred tea) to Carol Murdock Scinto, our longtime editor and colleague. She, like some of our early and stalwart supporters, has gone to eternal glory, but our Resource Center of 6,000+ books is her brilliant legacy. *Cheerio!*

Pay tribute to our program partners -- WATERtalk speakers and participants, Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network, Women Crossing Worlds colleagues, WATERmeditation and WATERritual communities whose scholarship, spirituality, and activism inspire, challenge, and nourish generations. *¡Salud!*

Honor our colleagues in the Women-Church Convergence, Center for Womanist Leadership, the Women's Caucus of the AAR/SBL, the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, the Providence Community, Loretto Community, Mercy Community, the many feminist groups, religious communities, seminaries, universities, and justice organizations with whom we collaborate in our struggles for justice and peace. *Santé!*

Drink to the bright future of WATER. To our collective health! To our young people and to their children. To our wise elders! 干杯 *Gānbēi!*

© 2024 Diann L. Neu is Co-founder and Co-director of Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER), dneu@hers.com



Lisa Lauterbach
Staff Associate
from Nuremberg,
Germany through
the Brethren
Volunteer Service

In Memory of Her

WATER joins many friends and families in mourning the deaths of four WATER colleagues. Let us rejoice in the wonderful life and contributions to the world of these beloved and respected friends and collaborators. Long may their spirits soar and inspire similar good work.



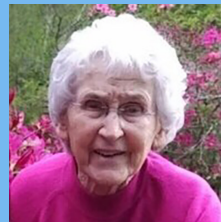
Ruth McDonough Fitzpatrick March 10, 1933 - June 15, 2023

Her work for justice in El Salvador, her tireless efforts on Catholic women's ordination, her commitment to the Loretto Community and to Sisters Against Sexism, her Irish humor and artistic abilities only begin to describe a central figure in American Catholic feminism.



Dr. Susan Love February 9, 1948 - July 2, 2023

One of the world's most visible public faces in efforts to eradicate breast cancer, she was a groundbreaking surgeon, researcher, tireless breast health advocate, and author of the best-selling "*Dr. Susan Love's Breast Book*," the go-to resource for people living with breast cancer.



Helen Vinton, SP December 9, 1932 - August 5, 2023

An 'ecological pioneer' and rural organizer, she learned at an early age to love and care for Earth and the creatures on it. She believed that you must put into Earth everything you take out and do it faithfully. She worked with international groups in Canada and Norway to save heritage seeds to restart agriculture and feed the world.



Patricia Crowley, OSB May 13, 1939 - October 14, 2023

A prominent social justice advocate in Chicago, she was a community leader, teacher, administrator, and spiritual director who worked with unhoused women, women seeking asylum, and those on the margins. She embodied and inspired the Crowley family wisdom and generosity.

A WATER Welcome to Lisa Lauterbach! *By Brooke Andrews*

We are very excited to be joined in the office by Lisa Lauterbach, our 2023-2024 Staff Associate! Lisa has come from Nuremberg, Germany through the Brethren Volunteer Service to get involved in political activism and advocate for social justice, two longtime interests of hers.

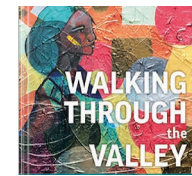
At the office, Lisa loves working in an environment she describes as "sophisticated and inspiring, which enables me to learn something new every day," citing both the people and the endless number of books she is surrounded by. Like previous interns, Lisa's daily tasks include planning programs, website editing, posting on our social media, and much more.

Aside from the job, she says that, so far, she has been enjoying living "so close to the Capitol, and, therefore, lots of museums." WATER welcomes Lisa and looks forward to an enriching year!

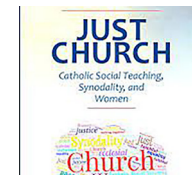
Program Highlights of Summer - Fall 2023

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.

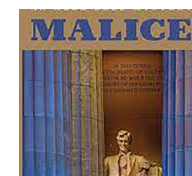
WATERtalks



In June, we gathered with Emilie Townes, Alison P. Gise Johnson, and Angela D. Sims, editors of *Walking Through the Valley: Womanist Explorations in the Spirit of Katie Geneva Cannon*. They discussed how Dr. Cannon's work catalyzes the field of feminist/womanist studies in religion for generations to come.



In September, we spoke with Phyllis Zagano, best known for her tireless efforts to get Roman Catholic women ordained to the diaconate. Her book, *Just Church: Catholic Social Teaching, Synodality, and Women*, asks what a just Catholic Church would look like, and why it is imperative that one emerges. Zagano's scholarship, realism, and strategizing are an important example of why and how change happens.



Our October talk centered around *Malice*, a new mystery novel by Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite. Mary E. Hunt blurbed, "Abraham Lincoln might as well have said, 'With malice toward many with charity for few...'" as the Cuban missile debacle and the bloody Freedom Rides played out... Protagonists Alex and Gwen, in their respective efforts to effect change, learn chillingly familiar lessons. Their actions remind readers that structural change and real justice remain elusive while solidarity and advocacy remain our best hope." Together we unpacked the many social ethical dimensions of this important and enjoyable read.

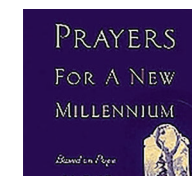
WATERmeditations

In June, WATER staff intern Patrice Rupp invited us to overcome mental obstacles and to create a space for loving ourselves in "*A Bold Journey to Self-love*." Again and again, we encounter obstacles that suppress self-love. It is a topic that concerns us in all phases of life.

In July, Mary E. Hunt led the WATER community in "*Praying with the Pros: Thanks to Benedictine Mary Lou Kownacki*." Mary Lou Kownacki's death leaves a huge hole in social justice networks. We used one of her prayers to inspire us as her strong energy surrounds a needy world.

In September, Cheryl Nichols offered reflections on racism in religion in her meditation titled "*Truth and Reconciliation: Religion, Racism, and the Legacy of Sister Thea Bowman*." She highlighted Sr. Thea's life and work engaged in the ministry of dismantling racist structures, attitudes, and relationships. This was a springboard for our shared silence which was followed by introspective conversation.

October's meditation, "*Goddesses of Justice*," was led by Cynthia Tootle, who always makes a unique and rich contribution to the circle. She brought messages from Goddesses whose voices we needed to hear. She invited us to contemplate justice in its many forms and reflect on the ancient Goddesses of Justice and the modern justice for which we pray.



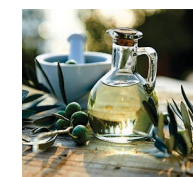
WATERrituals



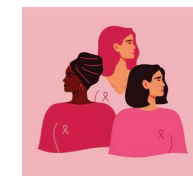
June 21st marks the Summer Solstice in the Northern Hemisphere. This is the longest day and shortest night of the year in the north, the shortest day and longest night in the south. For our June ritual, "Summer Solstice," we felt the rainbow of colors from the sun, and shared the fulfillment, passion, and creativity we wish for ourselves, for Earth, for the cosmos.



July marked the end of our time with our interns, and so we blessed them as they finished their work. "Hand in Hand Around the World" had us imagine the many ways we are connected to friends, family, colleagues, joining hand in hand with loved ones wherever they are.



In September, our theme was "Bless Feminist Ministers." Time and again communities have called forth individuals to bless them to do works of love, mercy, and justice. Feminist ministers bring about the kin-dom of God, the Holy One, Divine Wisdom Sophia. We blessed their spirits and celebrated their ministries of healing, social change, community-building, feminist theologies, gender and racial justice work.



October brought the start of fall and the month of Breast Cancer Awareness. For "The Faces of Breast Cancer," we honored Dr. Susan Love. We prayed for a cure and acted in solidarity with those who have or have had breast cancer, their friends, colleagues, and loved ones. We will continue to support and assure them that they are not alone.

WATERtea

In July, Canadian journalist and activist Rosemary Ganley spoke about "Living a Feminist Life." She encouraged people in small groups to ask: What is your feminist vision? What large/small actions will you take to actualize your vision? It made for rich conversation and food for thought.



Women Crossing Worlds

In November, the Mexican feminist theology group *Tras las huellas de Sofia*, led by Maria Andrea González Benassini, featured Polish theologian Antonina Wozna who lives in Spain talking about Mary Daly's *Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy*. Antonina translated the volume into Spanish, *Pura lujuria: filosofia feminista elemental*, Ediciones Cátedra. Mary E. Hunt spoke about Mary Daly the person and her work as Daly's audience expands among Spanish-speaking people.

