

## WATER's Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network Update

By Mary E. Hunt

WATER's Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network held its 27th annual gathering in San Antonio, TX, in conjunction with the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting. On Friday, November 17, 2023, forty colleagues from seven countries convened as wars raged in the Middle East and between Ukraine and Russia.

Michele Eastwood, Director of Research at Australian Lutheran College, provided a very useful overview and analysis of the recently failed "Voices" referendum: "Whether to alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice." Racism and confusion over wording stalled the referendum process. Young urban voters led the movement in favor. Stay tuned.

War in the Middle East was on everyone's mind. In small groups, we identified where we are located, with whom we are allied, and how we see the situation especially with regard to women, children, and female-identified persons. We strategized what tools and insights from feminisms, liberationist work, and theologies might be unique and relevant resources. A deeper sense of why people hold the views they do need not change our own views; it helps to humanize not homogenize the conversation. Women and children always suffer most in war despite many religions' claims to protect them.

These and other important discussions will continue at our mid-year FLTN Zoom meeting on Tuesday, June 11, 2024 at 4pm ET. The next in-person FLTN gathering will be in San Diego, CA, on Friday, November 22, 2024 at 4pm PT. See you there.



(l to r) Evangeline Anderson-Rajkumar, Boyung Lee, Nami Kim, and Mary E. Hunt at the Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network 27th annual gathering in San Antonio, TX.



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## War Solves Nothing By Mary E. Hunt

War, whether between Ukraine and Russia or Hamas and Israel, offers no obvious value to the world. Of course, it succeeds in responding to horrible invasions or incursions where people are harmed, often killed. Revenge seems to be a reflex as common as blinking an eye. But if 21st century global citizens think war solves anything in the long run, I fear they are sadly mistaken.

Call me a non-violence advocate. Guilty as charged. Nothing else makes sense to me from a feminist liberation perspective. Those on the margins, to whose welfare I am most committed, always lose in wars. For example, the U.S. can't fight a war without sacrificing many young people of color, including Green Card holders who are not yet citizens. Military Sexual Trauma, not only for women, is so widespread as to warrant its own page on the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs website.

War is said to be good for some economies. Manufacture and sale of armaments of contemporary warfare is big business. It creates jobs, generates income, and, by its own logic, requires products to be used before they expire, only to be replaced by the next generation of maiming and killing tools. War is also alleged to be good for some political parties whose fortunes rise (and often fall) based on the outcomes of what are inevitably negotiated ends to conflict. None of this justifies one child having a limb amputated without anesthesia, one woman being gang raped and left to die. The 'good' is so ephemeral as not to be good at all.

By virtually every other measure, war is an exercise in

futility. History is replete with tales of wars and warriors glorified for their courage and might. But the trope turns performatively ghastly when their successors come home in coffins. The front lines are moved like goal posts in a rigged game. Fighters lay waste to whole swaths of Earth that will take generations to return to a fertile, much less productive, state. War is an ecological disaster not waiting to happen, but unfolding now. Show me the value added by any of this.

There is something pernicious about watching war now, not in the fictionalized accounts decades later, but as it develops in real time. Viewing it makes postmodern warfare even less justifiable than earlier failures. Instant communications add anxiety to people thousands of miles away. Loved ones of those in battle witness on their cell phones the carnage their relatives and friends cause and experience. War today is something that engulfs the entire world as if we were there, and still we can do nothing about it.

All of these nauseatingly familiar scenes form the backdrop of 21st century life. It is no wonder epidemics of loneliness, increasing rates of suicide, and a general malaise permeate our culture. There are options that begin with diplomacy and negotiation, and end with peace and plenty. They are there for the choosing. "Choose life, then, so that you and your descendants may live." Deut. 30:19 ■

© 2024 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)

## Congratulations to WATER's 2024 Graduates!

WATER is proud to announce our interns and staff who graduated in 2024! Please join us in celebrating our graduates and their achievements. We wish them each success on their next adventures. Oh the places they will go and the good they will do! (from left to right) Pamella Miller, MDiv, Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, DC; Brooke Andrews, BA, University of Maryland, College Park, MD; Techika Rhodes, DMin, Howard University School of Divinity, Washington, DC.



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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](http://www.waterwomensalliance.org).

Mary E. Hunt, Diann L. Neu: Co-directors | Pamella Miller, Lisa Lauterbach, Brooke Andrews: Staff Associates | Emily Neufeld, Anali North Martin: Communications | 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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## Prayer to End War By Diann L. Neu

Godde of Mercy, Compassion, and Reconciliation,  
Hear our desperate cries. Answer our impatient prayers for peace.

Persuade the leaders of warring nations and peoples,  
Their allies and international agencies, to end war.  
Guide them to cease the fire, stop the aggression.  
Show them plans to negotiate, assess the costs,  
Then bind up the wounds, and talk until light dawns on peace.

Help us all find ways to do justice.  
Guide us to respect and serve each nation and all creation.  
Let us share food, water, prosperity, freedom, and peace.  
Together, with a united voice, we pray to end war.  
Amen. Blessed Be. May It Be So.



# CEASEFIRE NOW!

© 2024 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)

## Patrice Rupp Intern Reflection, 2022-23

I never believed myself to be an "office person," but WATER proved me wrong. Surrounded by thousands of books and lovely company thanks to Mary and Diann, it felt like a perfect fit right from the start. When I left Germany for a volunteer service year from October 2022 to September 2023, a placement with WATER was not what I expected, but most certainly what I needed.

Through my Internship, I was able to gain many new skills: how to manage a website and a database, archiving, improving my writing skills, using my creativity to plan a WATERritual or WATERmeditation, and much more.

I was responsible for handling Zoom, incoming emails and phone calls, which allowed me to reach out to all the admirable people connected to this Alliance. What I always liked about the WATER community was that it felt like family. I value the special bond I was able to form with so many intelligent people around the world. The programs were one of my favorite activities because they gave us time to share what moved us from main issues of feminist theology to the latest trends like the Barbie movie.

Representing WATER at different events throughout the Washington, DC area was another of my favorite tasks. I attended a Senate hearing on the Equal Rights Amendment, participated in a press conference at the U.S. Capitol, and saw Vice President Kamala Harris speak at Howard University. Of course, daily life at WATER doesn't always look like that, but that does not make it any less interesting.

As an international intern, I can recommend this experience to everyone, regardless of where you come from and what knowledge you have. My journey was a never-ending learning process that helped me improve my English and understanding of U.S. work culture. Mary and Diann supported me with knowledge, recommendations, and so much more than I could have asked for.

My internship offered new tasks and challenges while at the same time supporting my passions. WATER sees itself as a springboard for the future of its interns. Now that this future has arrived, I can confirm this is true.

## INTERN AT WATER

Be a Part of an Action-based Community  
Become a WATER Intern for Fall 2024 or Winter 2025!

WATER welcomes students from seminaries, universities, colleges, volunteer programs, and more to work in the WATER Office.

Interns at WATER engage in a full range of activities from office work to program planning. They learn how a small non-profit is run and what it takes to nurture an Alliance. Those wishing to do their own research will have a chance to utilize WATER's constantly growing Resource Center as well as consult with our experienced staff through in-house seminars.

Interns must commit to a minimum of six weeks and can stay for as long as a year or two. All participants are encouraged to apply for academic credit from their home institutions for their work at WATER. We are delighted to work with volunteer programs which sponsor volunteers with expenses shared by the on-site placement, in this case WATER.

Learn more: <https://www.waterwomensalliance.org/interns/>



(Top l to r, clockwise) Patrice Rupp and Brook Andrews; Lisa Lauterbach; Pamela Miller and Techika Rhodes; Anali North Martin, and Emily Neufeld.

## Brooke Andrews Intern Reflection, 2023-24

Coming out of my junior year of college in 2023, I had few expectations starting my summer internship at WATER. It was my first time having an office job, so all I had to go on was what I had seen on TV or heard from my parents. I was concerned about long hours, monotonous tasks, and a stale atmosphere. I'm glad to report that the WATER office failed to deliver any of those things!

Instead, this office welcomed me warmly and quickly made me a valued colleague. I got to make a deep impact through my tasks, which ranged from program planning to website editing to archival work. I met many diverse and extraordinary people in Zoom meetings and trips to the Capitol. My internship was supposed to be over with WATER's annual break in August, but when the time came, no one, including myself, was ready for me to leave.

Since September, I have continued my work, now as part-time staff. Twice a week I take the Metro from College Park to Silver Spring to do whatever is needed. Each week presents a new project, so even after nearly a year, I have never felt bored. On top of that, what's even better than doing the work is seeing the impact. Small tasks, like writing something for our newsletter or drafting an email, feels monumental when I see the list of thousands of names of people who will be reading my words.

I have been told that my experience at WATER has spoiled me for future office jobs, and I could not agree more. Now I will only feel satisfied when I know that my work positively affects others. I am blessed to have this job and community to shape my perception of what role a career should take in a person's life. As I graduate from college and look to the future, I'll take the lessons I have learned at WATER with me.

## Program Highlights for November 2023 - March 2024

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](http://www.waterwomensalliance.org) under Programs.

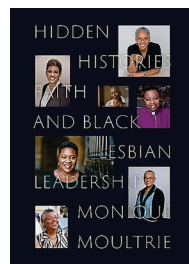
### WATERtalks



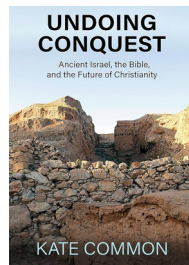
In December, Georgetown Professor and disability activist Rabbi Dr. Julia Watts Belser discussed her new book, *"Loving Our Own Bones: Disability Wisdom and the Spiritual Subversiveness of Knowing Ourselves Whole."* This profoundly important book makes all abilities valuable.



In January, Director of Woman Spirit Ireland, Dr. Mary Condren, introduced Rev. Dr. Ní Riain who talked about themes from her recent book, *"Sacred Rituals for Everyday Prayer."* These include spirituality and aging, the Divine Feminine, and the Celtic Spiritual Woman's song.



In February, Dr. Monique Moultrie presented her book, *"Hidden Histories: Faith and Black Lesbian Leadership."* It is an important study of 18 Black women who "do the work their souls must have" as the late Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon taught. Their signal contributions to faith communities and larger religious circles reflect anti-racism in action. These leaders sparkle with genius and effectiveness from which the world benefits.



In March, visiting assistant professor at Methodist Theological School in Ohio Kate Common explored her new book, *"Undoing Conquest: Ancient Israel, the Bible, and the Future of Christianity."* She explained how "the biblical conquest narratives shaped Christian ideology" and how some of the same dynamics are playing out in the current struggles in the Middle East.

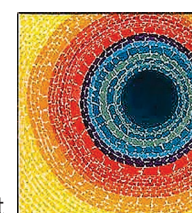
### WATERmeditations

In November, Kitty Madden led a reflection on *"Ministry of Presence"* which was based on her longtime accompaniment of rural women with high-risk pregnancies through the Casa Materna in Matagalpa, Nicaragua.

In December, Adrienne Corti helped us get into the spirit of Advent in a world clouded by war and violence with *"Advent: Piercing the Darkness."* We meditated on Isaiah 9:2: "The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them."

In January, retired United Church of Christ minister Brad Lutz gave a welcome start to 2024 with *"Beauty: An Invitation to a Year of Wonder."* He encouraged us to practice wonder as a way to take a break from feeling so much sorrow and sadness over our painfilled world.

In February, Women's Ordination Conference Program Director Katie Lacz sparked meditation with her reflection, *"Transforming Energy and Recognizing Rhythm: Meditating with the Artwork of Alma Woodsey Thomas."* She focused on the life and work of the first African American woman to have a solo show at the Whitney Museum in New York City and asked, "How do we transform energy with our own limbs and our own spirits?"

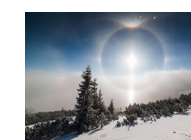


In March, nurse and minister Virginia Day presented a reflection on the theme of *"Persistence."* Drawing on biblical and other ancient examples, she offered contemporary models of persistence. She highlighted the strength and resource that the practice of persistence may offer in these complex times.

### WATERrituals



November gave us an opportunity to *"Give Thanks for Women of Wisdom,"* reaching from goddesses to biblical figures, from notable women in recorded herstory to people in our personal lives.



With December's ritual *"Kindling the Light of Peace for Winter Solstice,"* we beseeched the sun to return again, to awaken compassion, justice, and peace in the world and us.



In January, *"Pray with Us"* invited the WATER community to reclaim women's prayer traditions and create ways of praying as well as naming and understanding creation. It helped us relate to the Divine, to one another, and to all beyond the distortions of patriarchy and kyriarchy.



With our February ritual *"Pray with us for World Cancer Day,"* we remembered those who are living with cancer and those who have died from it. We encouraged each other to pray and take action for a cure.



In March, the WATER community chose to *"Pray with us to Welcome Spring Renewal."* During this season of rebirth and promise of new life, we reflected on how we experience the Divine, Creator Spirit, Wisdom Sophia, and gave thanks for the beauty and renewal of this time. We called forth personal and global dynamics that need to be brought into harmony.

### WATERtea

In November, DMin student and WATER collaborator Clarafrancie D. Cromer Sowers spoke about *"Unsung Heroines of the Civil Rights Movement."* She discussed her recent Alabama Civil Rights Pilgrimage with an emphasis on the important women whose identities and deeds are often obscured.



### WATER and Women of Dignity in Collaboration



In December, Diann Neu and Mary Hunt invited all Catholic lesbian/bisexual/transgender/queer women as well as those identifying as nonbinary/gender expansive and all our women friends to *"An Advent Liturgy: Prepare the Way of Peace."*



February's WATER and Women of Dignity collaboration, *"Bone of my Bones, Flesh of my Flesh: Feminism and Catholicism,"* featured Sam Barnes, youth advocate for LGBTQ+ inclusion in Catholic and Other religious spaces.