

Prayer

Cultivating Hope: An Act of Resistance

By Diann L. Neu



Take a deep breath.
Breathe in hope. Breathe out fear.
Breathe in resistance. Breathe out anxiety.
Breathe in solidarity. Breathe out loneliness.
In these uncertain times, hope is an act of resistance.
A person of hope resists war, racism, gender oppression, surveillance, pollution of soil and water, and enjoys life amid these struggles.
A person of hope opposes all forms of domination with strategic words and actions.
A person of hope sees needs and responds courageously.
A person of hope calls forth the best in people.
A person of hope is dedicated to their work and believes in the greater good.
Be *a person of hope*. Resist. Survive through the cracks.
Share hope.

© 2025 Diann L. Neu is Co-founder and Co-director of Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER), dneu@hers.com

WATER in the Media

www.waterwomensalliance.org/water-in-the-media/

Catholic Feminist Meets the Moment with Mary E. Hunt, March 5, 2025

Kwok Pui-Lan sits down with Mary E. Hunt to explore the intersection of faith, feminism, and social justice. In this discussion, Mary shares her insights on the evolving role of women in the Catholic Church, the pressing need for gender equality, and how feminist theology is shaping the future of religious discourse. Don't miss out on this rich blend of intellectual depth, humor, and passion. Kwok'n Roll is a discourse that makes a difference.



Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) Interview, February 28, 2025

In an interview with the CBC, feminist theologian Mary E. Hunt urged reform of the papal election process. Hunt explained that the process lacks transparency and needs to be more inclusive. She stressed the importance of including a far more diverse group of electors, especially young people and women. She also commented on the movie "Conclave" lest viewers think they know much about the secret process. Women were portrayed accurately in the movie as only one had a real voice. Surely change is needed.



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 over 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 | Magdalena Müller, Wed Naji: Staff Associates
Emily Neufeld, Anali North Martin: Communications | Cheryl Nichols: Volunteer

WATER is a 501(c)3 organization. All donations are tax deductible. We thank you for your support. © 2025 Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual.

What We're Reading: Summer Suggestions

As a way to highlight the newest addition to our Carol Murdock Scinto Library, we publish a list of books that we recommend. You can find these on our website:
www.waterwomensalliance.org/what-were-reading/

Collaboration

Mary E. Hunt spent a day with the BVM Women's Network (of the Sisters of Charity of the BVM, Dubuque, Iowa), which has deep roots in feminist social justice. Major changes in both Church and State challenge women to reassess our progress toward equity and inclusion. The group of about 80 persons sought creative, constructive ways forward as well as ways to resist oppression. It was a welcome watering of their roots in tumultuous times.



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

Volume 33 • Issue 2 • 2025

Hope Fades but Never Disappears By Mary E. Hunt

Many people I know are at their wit's end with the current state of the world. Things that were recently unthinkable—like the federal government dispatching the state-based National Guard in California without the governor's agreement and sending in the Marines to deal with Americans on American soil—are unfolding with impunity. A wholesale ban on citizens from certain countries that the U.S. does not favor and efforts to upend the educational mission of Harvard University, one of the most productive research institutions in the world, tarnish and diminish us all. Still, hope lurks around dark corners. It is found in nascent form in many sites of resistance. I seek hope like a thirsty person on a long hike, my canteen empty but imagining that cool, clean water source just over the brow of the next hill.

Two sources of hope for me this season were surprises. I visited the former Cathedral College, now the Virginia Mae Center, at the Washington National Cathedral. The structure of the building was familiar because the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* and WATER co-sponsored a study week there in the summer of 2008. Thirty scholar-activists and five faculty members from more than seven countries and four religious traditions reflected on "Making the Connections: Claiming Our Past—Envisioning Our Future Together." It was a memorable gathering, a springboard for the next generation's work.

However, the building was inaccessible to those with mobility challenges. There were three steps just to get to the dining room, and a host of other difficult unto impossible places to maneuver on wheels. WATER staff and some of our participants protested the situation. One colleague, an expert on accessibility, sent a detailed plan on what needed to be done. The Gothic-style building closed in 2008. It was empty for a decade, and recently reopened, tens of millions of dollars later.

Imagine my surprise to see that it's a wow. The original footprint and bones of the building are the same. But the several elevators, ADA accessible suite, and smart design mean that all participants can access the beautifully appointed facility with far greater ease. An elevator next to those blessed three steps is the most welcome addition. The whole thing gave me hope. Change can happen if we make it. And we had a small hand in this.

World/DC Pride 2025 gave me more hope. Hundreds of thousands of expected guests opted out because of visa concerns, their understandable refusal to visit or support the U.S. these days, and plain fear of what they might encounter. Many corporate sponsors dropped by the wayside. The parade and festival were, to my eyes, more diverse, included lots of support from allies, and had more trans people involved than any of the dozens of Pride events I have attended over four decades. We were like Girl/Boy Scouts by comparison in those early years!

This vibe was electric; clothing (or lack of it) and glitter said it all. It was as if the backlash against queer people unleashed a spirit of 'live and let live' that has been missing for a while. Not since HIV/AIDS has the queer community been so united against common oppression. Only together can we resist threats to same-sex marriage, the dismissal of trans people from the military, the purging of library books, and the end of DEI programs. No one has to like it all to know that when freedom is on the wane for some, it will soon be gone for all. I came home sweaty but very hopeful. We have opened space for more people to live on their own terms.

The human spirit seems hardwired for hope. The smart money is on hope in resistance. No wonder we persist. ■

© 2025 Mary E. Hunt is Co-founder and Co-director of Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER), mhunt@hers.com

Congratulations

Congratulations to the founders and supporters of the "Carmen Montull Vallés" Feminist Theology Chair at Iberoamericana University in Mexico City on the 15th anniversary of this important work. Many feminist scholars have taught and lectured as part of this creative project.



Mari Carmen Servitje de Mariscal, Founder



Essay Winner Announcements

WATER delights in announcing the winners of the WATER Essay Contest 2025 in the Style of Rosemary Ganley, "Feminists Change the World 650 Words at a Time." The winners (in alphabetical order) are:

Elise DeGooyer (Seattle, WA), "Solidarity for All Women and Girls: In Process." The essay may be found here: www.waterwomensalliance.org/solidarity-for-all-women-and-girls/

Margaret Gonsalves (Maharashtra, India), "Empowering Indigenous Girls." The essay may be found here: www.waterwomensalliance.org/empowering-indigenous-girls/

Cheryl Lyon (Peterborough, Canada), "Feminism in the Climate Crisis." The essay may be found here: www.waterwomensalliance.org/feminism-in-the-climate-crisis/

• They each will receive a prize of \$650 for their articles.

This third year of the contest proved to be very compelling. Topics were timely, writing was crisp, and the messages were conveyed well. Read and see! It is good that this style of accessible writing is catching on for a broad audience.

WATER remains grateful to the generous donor who funded this project. We are in awe of and thank Rosemary Ganley, whose tireless collaboration and boundless wisdom inspire us. Thanks to all who submitted essays. Your work matters and helps to transform the world. Start planning your 2026 entry. Details to follow.

WATER Out and About

Jan. 18, People's March, Washington, DC & across the U.S.

In January thousands of people protested in Washington, DC and across the United States to express their opposition to President Trump and the policies he is poised to implement. The demonstration was a diverse gathering of individuals, including members of the WATER Staff, who came together to advocate for various causes: women's rights (cisgender and transgender women, and non-binary individuals included), LGBTQIA+ rights, climate justice, education, reproductive justice, immigrants' rights, and others.

Feb. 2025, National Equal Justice Association, San Fran., CA

WATER interns joined the National Equal Justice Association (NEJA) for their Leadership Programs in San Francisco. We connected with NEJA during the Mary's Pence Grantee Gathering in the Fall in Minnesota. They invited WATER to their office for a five-day immersive training. Thank you WATER and Mary's Pence for making collaborations like this possible.



Wed and Magdalena looking to protect democracy!



Women-Church Convergence Welcomes Pope Leo XIV

June 2025

Women-Church Convergence, a coalition of autonomous Catholic-rooted feminist groups working to build just social and ecclesial structures, welcomes Pope Leo XIV as a colleague in ministry and a partner for peace.

We hope that he will walk the path of Pope Francis, Dorothy Day, Hildegard of Bingen, and Brigit of Ireland as an openhearted, open-minded pastor in the common struggle for peace in a bellicose world.

We pray that he will embrace the Holy Spirit's assurance that women, girls, and non-binary people are equal to men in love, compassion, and ability and thus eligible for all ordained ministries and decision-making processes in the Roman Catholic Church.

We invite Pope Leo to join people of goodwill from many starting points who champion equality, diversity, and inclusion of the LGBTQIA+ community and who foster safe, abuse-free churches.

We look forward to his collaboration and offer our commitment to work tirelessly on these values that we uphold.

We extend warm wishes for his global ministry.

March 9, Catholic Women Strike, Worldwide, Washington, DC

Diann Neu and Mary E. Hunt gathered in DuPont Circle, Washington, DC with women worldwide to strike against the institutional Roman Catholic Church for its restricting structures and policies that prevent women-identified persons, LGBTQIA+ people, and many people of color from being ordained and involved in decision-making. As Mary E. Hunt said, "So strike with humor, strike with joy. Pray with others and redirect your giving. Refuse to cross even invisible picket lines. Then rejoice in the knowledge that 'where two or three are gathered' there can be inclusive churches if we create them."

March 2025, Women's Ordination, Georgetown University

The WATER interns attended a discussion as part of the Gender + Justice Initiative's *Faith, Feminism, and Being Unfinished* series. The event featured Kate McElwee and Katie Lacz from WOC, and singer Michaela Harrison. *Love Wins*, the series' third part, was inspired by Anne E. Patrick's "Madeleva Lecture on Women, Conscience, and the Creative Process."

April 5, "Hands Off" Protest, Washington, DC and Worldwide

WATER protested with thousands of people around the U.S. and worldwide to protect democracy. These gatherings served as powerful demonstrations of people's dissatisfaction with the current administration. Taken as a whole, the demonstrations symbolize hope, courage, and determination. At WATER, we are encouraged to continue our educational efforts and we will.

Program Highlights January—May 2025

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.

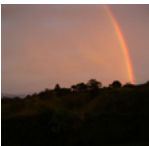
WATERmeditations



In January, Brad S. Lutz invited us to find grace with the theme "*Finding a Cure for Loneliness*." We meditated and thought about ways to find beauty and meaning in solitude.



"*Kuan Yin: Goddess of Compassion*" inspired our February meditation led by Cynthia Tootle. This meditation reminded us to be compassionate people and to be graceful and kind to ourselves.



The March meditation took a different approach with "*Meditation 101: A Collective Introduction to Forms of Meditation*." With the help of familiar meditation companions, we learned some how-tos from one another and exchanged techniques and tips.



In April, Virginia Day offered reflections on the significance of personal, communal, and global choices under the rubric "*And That Made All the Difference*." We meditated on being grateful for the path that we have chosen.



In May, Lillian Lewis offered a contemplative prayer as a response to contemporary U.S. events. "*The Wardrobe: Taking the First Step*" was based on the work of C.S. Lewis as it applied to today's complicated situation.

WATERrituals



In January, we came together to pray, hope, resist, and recommit! The WATER community tried to make meaning out of these historic times under the theme "*Welcome the New Year with All of Its Struggles and Hopes*."



In February, the WATER Alliance came together to kindle a light of love during difficult and uncertain times. We were "*Sharing Love in Difficult Times*" so that love and compassion may overcome our worries and angst.



In March, we joined together to "*Celebrate Women during Women's History Month*." We were called to solidarity, speaking the names of courageous foresisters, telling their incredible stories, and thanking them for sharing their unique gifts.



WATER's mantra, "*If we share, among us, there is enough*," took flesh in this April ritual of giving and receiving to celebrate our planet with our time, prayers, and resources.



In May, participants were invited to "*Breathe, Slow Down, (and) Cherish Life*." Together, we sat without distractions to hold onto faith, recognize beauty, and cherish relationships.

WATERtalks

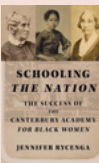
In January, WATER collaborated with the Réseau Compassion Network (RCN), the Catholic Network for Women's Equality (CNWE-Western Region), the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions (RNDM), and the Grey Nuns (SGM) to welcome Elizabeth Davis, RSM and Phyllis Zagano, PhD. They shared their expertise, opened conversations, and discussed what may come next for women as synodality unfolds.



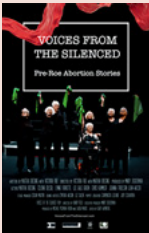
In February, "*Charlotte Bunch: Lesbian Feminist Activist with Religious Roots in Conversation with Mary E. Hunt*" was a chance to reflect on how LGBTQIA+ and religious experiences evolved. Feminist leaders Charlotte and Mary talked about the progress of lesbian feminism and its intersections with religion.



WATER invited Dr. Jennifer Rycenga in March to talk about her new book, *Schooling the Nations: The Success of the Canterbury Academy for Black Women*. Jennifer taught us how allies can use privilege to create social change.



April was a time to listen to the "*Voices from the Silenced*" as co-writers and co-directors Victoria Rue and Martha Boesing discussed the film version of their play "Voices from the Silenced: Pre-Roe Abortion Stories." Since the Dobbs decision (2022), the stories of women who had abortions before Roe (1973) are painfully familiar and contemporary.



In May, WATER hosted the Feminist Liberation Theologians' Network Mid-Year Gathering on Zoom. Colleagues from several countries came together to discuss "*What in the World is Going On?*" and to find new ways to move forward as a community. Susan W. Thistlethwaite and Kwok Pui-lan set the tone with remarks on oligarchy, necropolitics, and mainstream media. Four colleagues from Quito, Dublin, Sydney, and Cambridge (MA) added their insights.



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