



Bottom left: Mary E. Hunt, Joan Chittister, and Diann Neu at the Stuart Center in Washington, DC. **Top left:** Emily Cohen, former WATER intern, and her mother Myra visit WATER. **Top right:** WATER staff, interns, and former interns celebrate 30 years of inclusivity with Cindy Lapp at Hyattsville Mennonite: Emily Harder, Diann Neu, Annabeth Roeschley, Cindy Lapp, Mary E Hunt, Kate Stoltzfus, and Elizabeth Hardt. **Bottom right:** Clarafrancie Cromer Sowers, former WATER intern, joins Rita Nakashima Brock and staff for tea and conversation on moral injury.



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A Pause in Religion as Usual

By Mary E. Hunt

After Orlando, President Barack Obama asked with righteous anger, “Where does this stop?” This is a useful question for reflecting on the context and dimensions of the tragedy. Religions can give radical answers to “Where do we begin?”

In June 2015, the nation and the world reeled when a gunman killed nine people including the pastor at an African American church in Charleston, South Carolina. In June 2016, the crime scene was a gay nightclub where another gunman killed forty-nine people and wounded as many in Orlando. Most of the victims were young Latinx people of various gender identities and sexual orientations who had been dancing their hearts out on a Saturday night.

Such benign settings belie the method in such madness—attacking socially vulnerable people despite indisputable advances made by their oppressed communities. The hard truth is that many religious communities have contributed to the problems of racism and heterosexism.

The contemporary climate in the United States is violent and coarse, frightening and confusing. The gunmen who perpetrate these crimes do so because they can; there are 300 million guns for 319 million U.S. citizens. Socially sanctioned hatred, mental illness, and

internationally orchestrated or encouraged terrorism will make such killings increasingly frequent. Where are religious groups on gun control?

Backlash against the first African American president, discomfort with the first female presidential candidate, resentment against marriage equality, and Islamophobia are part of the current dis-ease that plagues America. Global terrorism, economic inequalities, racism and ethnic biases, sexism and gender oppression, climate change, and more combine to produce a diverse country in trouble.

It is no wonder some young people are confused and a few resort to violence. When they do, they stir up the embers of past horrors—for African Americans the vestiges of slavery, Jim Crow, and the fire hoses of Civil Rights struggles; for LGBTQIA people the closet, suicides, HIV/AIDS, rape, and discrimination.

To President Obama’s question, “Where does this stop?” the clear answer is that it does not stop. We stop it. Evil is as old as history. The question today is not about God, but about us.

So where do people of faith and/or good will start? Great solidarity can emerge from such terrible incidents. The groundswell of support for the Orlando LGBTQIA community is heartening. Still, big changes are needed to assure people who wonder if their club, gym, or community center will be next. *(continued on page 2)*

Thank you Cindy and Hyattsville Mennonite for 30 Years!

WATER would like to thank Cindy Lapp, longtime WATER friend and colleague, for her pastoral leadership at Hyattsville Mennonite Church. This LGBTQIA welcoming congregation celebrates 30 years of struggle and inclusion. Thanks, Cindy, for your commitment to social justice and equality. You and your congregation inspire and encourage all of us.

Thank you WATER donors!

You make WATER programs, rituals, and writings possible through your gifts. Thank you for your faithful support.



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Who We Are

WATER is a global 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 change. Founded in 1983 by Mary E. Hunt and Diann L. Neu, we have been empowering women to address structural violence for over thirty years — making WATER one of the oldest feminist religious non-profit organizations in the world.

The WATER community needs you to work toward inclusive theologies and rituals, to push for social change, and to collaborate across many differences. Join us! To learn more about what we do, visit us at www.waterwomensalliance.org.

Mary E. Hunt Diann L. Neu | Co-founders and Co-directors

Emily Harder Elizabeth Hardt Melissa Feito Dana Tufariello | Staff Associates

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Mourning Orlando, Uniting in Love

WATER mourns the lives taken by senseless violence in Orlando, and stands with the LGBTQIA, Latinx, and multiracial communities worldwide.

We continue to strive for a world in which safety is not determined by how or whom we love and self-expression does not come at a cost. We strive for a world in which violence and hate against marginalized communities are eradicated for good.

May remembering the names of those lost inspire us to act so that this pain is never felt again. May love triumph over hate.





Hello Summer Interns!

WATER is glad to welcome two new summer interns!

Melissa Feito (center right) recently graduated from Tufts University in Boston with a B.A. in English, and with minors in Media studies and Gender studies. **Dana Tufariello** (center left), a rising senior at The Catholic University of America in Washington DC, is studying Social Work and Music.

They join year-long staff members **Emily Harder** (far left) of the Mennonite Voluntary Service and **Elizabeth Hardt** (far right) of the Loretto Volunteer Program. We look forward to the new insights, energy, and projects they will bring to WATER in the coming months.

Women-Church Convergence in Action

By Mary E. Hunt

Women-Church Convergence met for its annual, very productive, equally enjoyable gathering in Hartford, CT on the weekend of May 20-22, 2016. It was a welcome chance for face-to-face conversations in our largely virtual world. The gathered took the opportunity to review the activities of member groups and commit to deeper, more deliberate collaboration.

Critical discussion of abuse of women in the Roman Catholic Church was a sobering reminder that our work is just beginning. The hopeful campaign, “A Church for Our Daughters,” underscored the need for imaginative, practical efforts since the church is not a safe, welcoming place for any children as long as discrimination reigns. The long, faithful work of Convergence groups is the best evidence that

efforts will continue unabated toward justice.

The Connecticut Women’s Ordination Conference group met with the Convergence for a showing of Dr. Teresa Forcades’ erudite theological lecture from the Fall 2015 Women’s Ordination Worldwide conference.

Discussion ensued about strategies for making substantive church change with new colleagues bringing their wisdom. A warm welcome was extended to the CT group to collaborate as part of the Convergence.

The next Convergence meeting will be in the Spring of 2017, in the Chicago region. Meanwhile, monthly meetings by phone and various actions undertaken in concert keep Women-Church Convergence and its member groups moving forward. ■

Recent Articles by Mary E. Hunt

“Pope Francis Has Painted Himself into a Corner on Women Deacons” in *Religion Dispatches*, May 17, 2016
“Pope Francis’ Love Letter is an Opportunity Lost” in *Religion Dispatches*, April 11, 2016
“Sally Ride and the Quest for Social Space” in the *Feminist Studies in Religion* blog, March 4, 2016
“Should Barbie Get Her Feet Washed at Church?” in *Religion Dispatches*, February 1, 2016

Find them at www.waterwomensalliance.org/category/writingsbymaryhunt/

Upcoming Programs

Join us at WATER or by phone. Register for upcoming events at www.waterwomensalliance.org or email waterstaff@hers.com.

WATERritual

Thursday, **July 16** at 7:30pm ET
Ritual: “Standing with Malala Yousafzai” with Diann L. Neu

Contemplative Prayer

Monday, **July 11** at 7:30pm ET
“Discovering Joy” with Elizabeth Hardt
A time of silence and reflection followed by optional sharing.

Catholic Lesbian/Queer Women's Group

Sunday, **July 10** at 11:30am ET
Liturgy: “Rabboni: Mary of Magdala.”
Community-building teleconference with WATER and DignityUSA offering feminist liturgy and conversation.

Sisterly Conversations 2016: “Nurturing Our Spirits — Sharing Our Sacred Practices”

with Mary E. Hunt
Friday to Sunday, **September 9 to September 11** at Kirkridge Retreat and Study Center, Bangor PA
A weekend for LGBTQIA women to come together and focus on spirituality and sexuality.

Feminist Liberation Theologians’ Network

Friday, **November 18** from 4-6pm at the AAR/SBL Annual Meeting in San Antonio TX
Topic: “Intersectionality and Political Action” with Nami Kim, Alba Onofrio, Judith Plaskow, and Andrea Smith.



WATERtalks Highlights

Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite joined WATER in April for a sobering conversation on her latest book, *Women’s Bodies as Battlefield: Christian Theologies and the Global War on Women*.

Our May teleconference added to the conversation of violence against women by featuring professor and author **Rita Nakashima Brock**, who discussed her most recent book, co-authored with Gabriella Lettini, *Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury After War*.

Benedictine Sister **Joan Chittister** closed out our springtime WATERtalks with her presentation in June. Author of over 50 books, Joan focused on her *Scarred by Struggle, Transformed by Hope*. Her sensitivity and insight into the transformative experience of struggle provided rich discussion.

Audio and notes on all WATERtalks can be found on our website www.waterwomensalliance.org

Ritual: A Church for Our Daughters

By Diann L. Neu and the WATER staff

Call To Gather: Imagine a church without women – our daughters, granddaughters, nieces, goddaughters, neighbors, friends, and their daughters. “Missing: The Next Generation of Catholic Women” warns a headline.

Confession: We confess to each other rather than to a male figure of authority.

M: I confess that I admire and trust all the Catholic women in my life more than any male Catholic priest.

E: I confess that I resent that my childhood Catholic education taught me so much that I had to unlearn.

E: I confess that my church’s silence on the acceptance of LGBTQIA members silenced me for far too long.

D: I confess that I feel deep anger when I hear celibate priests define womanhood, and even deeper anger when Catholic women agree with their objectifying labels.

Reading: “Declaration for Our Daughters” (*Read the full text at achurchforourdaughters.org/declaration*)

“We call on Church leaders to work with us to build a Church that strikes down every oppressive practice, teaching, and law that assigns women and girls to subordinate status.”

Reflection: What do you hear Catholic women saying about gender equality? What do you want to tell church leaders?

Eucharistic Prayer by Diann L. Neu

Praise to you, Loving God, for you create our daughters, granddaughters, nieces, and goddaughters in your image, **Response: We give thanks. Merci. Danke. Gracias. XieXie.**

Praise to you, God of Thecla, Phoebe, Junia, Prisca, for you raise up women house church leaders. **R:**

Praise to you, Divine Wisdom, for you gave us Jesus, who gathered the community for a meal, took bread and fruit of the vine, gave you thanks, saying: Take this, all of you; eat and drink. This is my body. Do this to remember me. **R:**

Praise to you, Divine Wisdom, for you pour out your Spirit on this Eucharist and on us. You call us to heal a fragmented church and society, to mend broken hearts, and to feed hungry souls. **R:**

Sharing the Torch: In solidarity with all daughters, let us go forth from this circle to tend the bold flames of justice and peace for all. Let us share the torch!

© Diann L. Neu, Co-director of WATER, dneu@hers.com
For full script, see www.waterwomensalliance.org/monthly-prayers-and-rituals/



A Pause. . . (continued from page 1)

Comfort for the large immigrant community in Orlando whose children died is helpful. But it is no substitute for substantive immigration reform and attention to Puerto Rico, a land made poor by imperialism.

Pastoral counseling for the bereaved and soaring funeral oratory are necessary to cope with loss. But the long-term need is for religions to change teachings and practices that permit, or in some cases even invite discrimination on the basis of race, sexual orientation, and/or gender identity.

Religious groups can be helpful in eradicating anti-Islamic ideology, creating space for people who profess no faith whatsoever, banning assault weapons of mass destruction, putting heterosexism to rest once and for all. They need to work at it.

In the words of my Catholic tradition, we are *in extremis*, in a hard place. To jumpstart that work, I propose suspending worship services, all worship, for a few weeks. Groups could use the time intentionally to educate, caucus, rally, lobby, register to vote, and turn in weapons. “No service this week, but come help.” That would get people’s attention. Prayer and worship are important, but there are times, *in extremis*, when a change in business as usual brings about something new.

Imagine those hours spent talking with people with whom we disagree, learning to listen and love. Such acting like human beings is what all the grace gained through our previous prayer is for. Then, after some social changes, we can resume religion as usual, and everyone can dance their hearts out. ■

Mary E. Hunt is Co-director of Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER).