



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

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**Left:** Cecilia Lapp, who spent time in the WATER office as a child, returned for a visit with her mother and longtime WATER colleague, Cindy Lapp; **Top center (l to r):** Mary E. Hunt, Cindy Lapp, Hannah Dorfman, and Katharina von Kellenbach at the Ministers March for Justice in Washington, DC; **Bottom Center:** Mexican colleagues Marisa Noriega (left), and Andrea Gonzáles (right) with Mary at the Feminist Studies in Religion Conference at Drew University; **Right:** Diann L. Neu and Clarita Ajo enjoy an offering to the orichás at WATER's Feminist Santería ritual.

## Thank YOU!

As we reflect on the harvest this year, we are so grateful for YOU. Your generosity is vital in sustaining WATER's communications, resources, programming, and networks for the WATER community and the broader world of religious feminists and allies. Your support helps to maintain strong voices working for good. YOU ensure that WATER's much-needed work for social justice will carry on to the next generation of young feminists in religion.

Thank you Jan Elsea for challenging us with a generous gift to upgrade our communications. This newsletter is the fruit of your gift! Thank you Marillyn Frances Craig for surprising us with a very generous gift from your estate. May you rest in peace as justice lives! Thank you Anonymous Donor for your unexpected gift of stock. You brought us great joy! Thank you WATERgems for Giving Every Month. You provide a steady stream of support for people who need WATER. Thank YOU for sharing your resources with WATER. You ensure that our projects continue and benefit many worldwide.



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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 people to address structural violence for over thirty 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 change, and collaborate from different 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 | Hannah Dorfman, Janaya Sachs, Heureuse Kaj: Staff Associates | Joe Scinto: Volunteer

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## Thriving Together for the Long Haul

By Mary E. Hunt

We have a new practice at WATER necessitated by the troubled times in which we live. At the beginning of every program, we reaffirm publicly our reason for being. We are “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.”

We are not simply an organization that studies and promotes feminist work in religion. There is no claim of objectivity. Rather there is an implicit commitment to true justice. We welcome all who wish to collaborate.

Collaboration has never been more urgent than in the past year when we have found ourselves and heard our colleagues say that we are living in uniquely difficult times. While history is replete with discernable cycles of war and peace, prosperity and lean times, the year since the 45th president of the United States took office is in a category all its own. It has been a time for clarifying competing values and putting into place the scaffolding of war, oppression, and, terrifyingly, global destruction.

The chilling effects—of stripping people of rights, of running roughshod over the environment, and of threatening to destroy whole countries—wear away at the healthiest of psyches and the most robust of spirits. It is safe to say that the body politic is on life support because Americans are so far from one another on so many basic issues that matter.

Colleagues in other countries pose two persistent questions to those in the United States: why did people vote the way they did and how can you change things? We ask ourselves the same questions, but mostly we roll up our sleeves and get on with social change.

Our role, and perhaps the role of most people in education and religion, is to help shape consciousness so that more people can survive. For example, tax policy that favors people with investments and property and leaves wage laborers to shoulder the burden is simply unjust. Health care delivery that assures wealthy people the best care science can create while people made poor are consigned to ill health and early deaths is unacceptable. Waging war on North Korea, prohibiting all persons from specific countries from visiting the United States, and postponing necessary conversations about gun safety are just a fraction of our scope of concern.

It is often hard to know where to start, what petition to sign next, which protest really needs more bodies, what candidate can get the job done. Yet so many people are in survival mode—immigrants awaiting deportation, emergency room patients with no medical insurance, people of color paying the high price of white supremacy. The hardest part is realizing that for many of our fellow citizens these are acceptable situations, rather than, as we see it, ones that cry to heaven for justice.

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## WATER Welcomes Staff Associates

WATER began the 2017-18 year by welcoming Staff Associates. Heureuse Kaj (left), a Master of Divinity student from Wesley Theological Seminary and the Democratic Republic of Congo, brings with her an interest in helping women who have been affected by violence. Hannah Dorfman (center) is back for a second year through the Loretto Volunteer Program. Well-known to many WATER program attendees, Hannah is excited to spend another year connecting with the WATER Alliance.

Mennonite Voluntary Service returns to WATER with Janaya Sachs (right), a recent graduate of Eastern Mennonite University. Janaya is anticipating a year filled with learning and growth. All three associates have started the year out strong, diving into book reviews, website maintenance, and ritual planning.

WATER welcomes them and looks forward to an enriching year!







## Welcome Carol Adams!

This summer, WATER interns got the chance to learn from some of the top scholars and advocates in the field. We were joined by the likes of Marie Fortune, Ann-Cathrin Jarl, Mary Condren, Loey Powell, and Jeanette Stokes.

Carol Adams, the famed vegan feminist theorist and author of *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, even stopped by the office with her husband and son for a wonderful vegan breakfast. We discussed her work, writing process, time in seminary, and what sustains her as an independent scholar-activist.

*l to r: Carol Adams, Susanna Stutler, and Karis Slattery*

## Thriving...

*(continued from page 1)*

Thriving is a dream for people who are barely able to survive. Victims of hurricanes and floods want only tomorrow's breakfast for their children. But if spiritual and religious resources play any role in an increasingly secular society, they function as the horizons of our dreams and offer blueprints for how to achieve them.

Very frequently, the stories of ancestors in our various faiths involve two elements: persistence in the face of giant obstacles and working together despite differences. We at WATER invite you to persist and to reach out to people who think differently in the perhaps naïve hope that together we might thrive. ■

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

### Recent Articles by Mary E. Hunt

"Kick Starting a New Catholic Conversation" with Marianne Duddy-Burke and Jamie Manson in *National Catholic Reporter*, October 2, 2017.

"Catholic Women's History in Catholic Women's Hands" in *National Catholic Reporter*, September 20, 2017.

Visit [www.waterwomensalliance.org/category/writingsbymaryhunt](http://www.waterwomensalliance.org/category/writingsbymaryhunt) for these and more.

### New Book By Diann L. Neu

*Providence Prayers*, WATERworks Press  
© 2017, \$15

Order at [www.waterwomensalliance.org/shop](http://www.waterwomensalliance.org/shop)

## Feminist Santería at WATER

*By Mary E. Hunt*

Summer staff welcomed Dr. Clara Luz Ajo, Vice Rector of the Seminario Evangélico de Teología (SET) in Matanzas, Cuba for what is becoming an annual visit. She is an expert on Santería, a unique blend of Catholic and African Yoruba practices. It began in 18th century slave communities under colonial rule and remains a very popular religious tradition in Cuba and other countries today.

meaning of Santería to an eager seminar group at WATER that included Goddess expert and local WATER colleague Cynthia Tootle. Orichás or saints are identified with various elements such as air and water. Each person can find an orichá with whom to identify.

Clarita and the staff prepared a memorable evening ritual. They constructed a colorful altar full of



*Clarita Ajo and Diann Neu create the altar for the Feminist Santería WATERritual.*

Santería, literally the worship of saints, is a religion of rituals more than creeds, ceremonies more than beliefs. Adherents meet in house churches where initiation and regular worship take place.

Clarita brings a decidedly feminist approach, placing the focus on women's bodies as holy and graced. She explained the origins, practices, and

Santería symbols. Cuban music accompanied traditional chants and dances. While no one apparently reached a trance state, all agreed that this was a powerful way to get in touch with elemental aspects of creation.

We await Clarita's return visit in 2018 and WATER's continued connections with our Cuban colleagues ■ the SET community in Mantanzas.

## Summer 2017 Program Highlights

Find audio of programs and ritual scripts at [www.waterwomensalliance.org](http://www.waterwomensalliance.org)  
Register for upcoming events on our website or email [waterstaff@hers.com](mailto:waterstaff@hers.com)  
Join us at WATER or by phone.

### WATERtalks



In June, **Ani Zonneveld**, founder and president of Muslims for Progressive Values, presented *Is Sharia Law Still Relevant?*, explaining it's context and how patriarchy has twisted a law about justice.



Editors of *The Mary Daly Reader*, **Jennifer Rycenga and Linda Barufaldi**, joined us in July and discussed the impact Mary Daly has had on them, how her work endures, and how it invites our engagement.



In September, former WATER intern **Rev. M Barclay** presented *In Conversation about Transgender Inclusion*. The first openly non-binary trans Deacon in the United Methodist Church, M spoke of issues facing trans people and steps to inclusion.



### WATERrituals

Our June ritual with **Diann L. Neu & WATER Staff** celebrated the *Summer Solstice* and named many places and cultures which have traditionally celebrated this day.

In July, **Clarita Ajo from Cuba, Diann L. Neu, & WATER Staff** led us in *Feminist Santería* in which we danced, sang, remembered our female ancestors, and paid tribute to the orichás.

**Diann L. Neu & WATER Staff** brought us together in September to celebrate *International Day of Peace: Lifting Up Women Peacemakers*.



In June, **Phoebe Knopf** encouraged us to ponder beginnings and what might just be starting within our own lives.



In July, **Judy Bond** reminded us of the role that time plays in our lives and how we can better cherish the time we have.



In September, **Cheryl Nichols** challenged us to think how 9/11 and the idea of terrorism have changed how we view the world today.

### Upcoming WATERprograms

#### WATERritual

Tuesday, October 24 at 7:30 PM ET with **Diann L. Neu & WATER Staff**  
"Reclaiming Our Voices in An Age of Violence"

#### WATERmeditation

Monday, November 6 at 7:30 PM ET with **Hannah Dorman**

#### WATERtalk

Wednesday, November 8 at 1:00 PM ET with **Susan Hayward and Katherine Marshall**

#### WATERcounseling

Call for spiritual direction, psychotherapy, or clergy supervision with **Diann L. Neu**, at WATER or via Skype.

## Harvest Meal Blessing of Thanks

*By Diann L. Neu*

### Light Candles of Gratitude

*An Elder:* I light this candle to thank our family and friends, Earth that grows our food, and migrant workers who harvest it.

*A Parent:* I light this candle to thank those who have tried to keep us safe this year, and to remember those who have suffered from natural disasters and human-made problems.

*A Child:* I light this candle to thank the prophets who resist and create new options for everyone.

### Iroquois Thanksgiving Prayer

We return thanks to our mother, the Earth, which sustains us.  
We return thanks to the rivers and streams,  
which supply us with water.  
We return thanks to all herbs,  
which furnish medicines for the cure of our diseases.  
We return thanks to the moon and stars,  
which have given to us their light when the sun was gone.  
We return thanks to the sun,  
that has looked upon the Earth with a beneficent eye.  
Lastly, we return thanks to the Great Spirit,  
in Whom is embodied all goodness,  
and Who directs all things for the good of Her children.

### Bless the Drink

Let us raise a glass and bless this drink in memory of all who share their passion for life.

Blessed are you, Holy One of Thanksgiving, for giving us this drink to quench our thirst. We thank you for the passion and joy of those we have known: young children, teenage dreamers, middle-aged visionaries, tireless prophets, and feisty elders. Let us share a Thanksgiving toast to life.

**Response: We give thanks. Danke. Gracias. Merci. Xie-Xie.**

### Bless the Bread and Food

Let us bless this bread and these foods in memory of those who sweat and toil for justice, and those who sweat and toil because of injustice.

Blessed are you, Holy One of the Harvest, for giving us Earth, water, air, and fire that combine to make this food. Open our eyes to see the hunger for others. Thank you for promising and giving your people food for the journey, nourishment for the struggle, and sustenance of every sort.

**Response: We give thanks. Danke. Gracias. Merci. Xie-Xie.**

### Let Us Eat and Share

Who are the people and what are the events for which you are thankful? Let us share stories of gratitude with one another as we eat together. (*Sharing*)

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