



From l to r: **Mary E. Hunt and Catherine Hunt-Neu**, Vote Forward volunteers, wrote heartfelt handwritten letters to unregistered voters encouraging them to participate in our democracy. **WATER staff and colleagues** gathered in Washington, DC at the Lincoln Memorial on the 57th anniversary of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech to call for racial justice and encourage voting and census participation. **Anali North Martin**, 2020-21 WATER Intern with the Mennonite Voluntary Service, accesses feminist theology books for the WATER library.



MARCH ON WASHINGTON

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

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WATER's Commitment to Justice

We affirm that all of WATER's efforts are focused on changing the cultural and intellectual assumptions that ground discrimination, exclusion, and destruction. We gather and work in service of a vision of inclusion, equality, and justice. All are welcome.

Thank YOU, WATER Donors! You are WATER!

Gracias! Danke! Asante! Merci! Xièxiè! Dzieki! Arigato! Ahéhee!
Your generous gifts in 2020, especially during Covid-19, have been invaluable. You make WATER programs and collaboration available to our alliance, actualizing religious and social change worldwide based on feminist religious values without regard for anyone's ability to pay. If we share, together we have enough.

Remember WATER in Your Year-end Giving!

Invest in Women. Promote Justice. Amplify Marginalized Voices.
You make a world of difference to the WATER community through your financial support. You have helped WATER be a voice for feminists in religion for almost 40 years. Let's keep moving forward together to assure that WATER will flow for the next generations. Please give online at www.waterwomensalliance.org by clicking 'Donate,' or send a check to WATER (address below). Thank you!

Become a WATERgem! Give Every Month.

Join our monthly giving program and provide a steady stream of support for people who need WATER. Especially during this Covid-19 time, this convenient way to give ensures sustaining support for WATER's life-giving programs. Donate at a level that is meaningful to you each month (\$10, \$25, \$50, \$100, or more) through our secure PayPal account. Click 'Donate' on WATER's website at www.waterwomensalliance.org for more information.



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Who We Are

WATER is a global interreligious 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 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 thirty-five 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.

Learning as We Go

By *Mary E. Hunt*

On the sunny Saturday morning the 2020 U.S. presidential election was called, my friend Clara Luz Ajo, Vice Rector of SET, the ecumenical seminary in Matanzas, Cuba, WhatsApp'ed me this message: *Parece que habrá un nuevo amanecer.* "It seems there will be a new dawn." If she could see it from her vantage point in a neighboring country that suffers grievously from U.S. foreign policy, I could find some light despite a ravaging pandemic, political division, and economic upheaval.

2020 has been a year like no other. As such, it has been a time to learn many lessons.

First, as a country, Americans learned a great deal about how government works, how important it is to vote one's conscience, and how to help others get involved in the voting process. Women-Church Convergence, of which WATER is a member, issued an open letter putting the U.S. Catholic bishops on notice to this effect when they began their early lobbying for people to vote only for candidates who oppose abortion. We urged a broad, intersectional agenda, emphasizing the eradication of white supremacy, xenophobia, climate destruction, and unbridled neoliberal economic policies. In the end, Trump took 50% and Biden 49% of the Catholic vote with white Catholics voting Republican in larger numbers than Catholics of color.

We also learned that politics is not everything. In a nation divided across geographic and ideological lines, it is clear that elections are not the only things that have consequences. As we have noted in the steady uptick in participation in WATER

programs, people are investing energy in educational, religious, and cultural groups as they seek ways forward. The very things of spirituality writ large—the oneness of creation, the sacredness of each person, our collective indebtedness to the source of life—are what provide avenues of hope.

Finally, we learned that humans, regardless of the wealth of their nation, are no match for nature when it comes to disease. Covid-19 is coursing through the world at breakneck speed. The U.S., which is 4% of the world's population, has 20% of the world's Covid deaths. There is clearly a connection between the dysfunction in U.S. democracy and these deaths that disproportionately affect people of color, those who are poor, and the elderly who are made more fragile than their years by neglect and loneliness. The need to work together, both in country and globally, has rarely been as urgent as it is now.

Long after vaccines have been created and distributed, and long after the pandemic fades into history with other plagues, each new dawn will invite us and those who follow to apply these lessons to a more just and habitable world.

■ © 2020 *Mary E. Hunt* is Co-founder and Co-director of Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER), mhunt@hers.com

WATER Rejoices as Democracy Wins in the USA

Saturday, November 7, 2020

The Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER) joins the celebration of democratically elected President-Elect Joseph R. Biden and Vice President-Elect Kamala Harris. We rejoice that Americans voted in record numbers in the midst of a pandemic.

We appreciate the solidarity shown to us by friends and colleagues around the world. With you, we reverence the values of democracy and freedom, concern for the common good, and advocacy for those who are marginalized. We pledge our efforts to bring feminist religious energies to the renewal of social structures so that white supremacy, greed, xenophobia, and other forms of oppression are banished from our shores.

Now, we join all people of good will in celebration of a new day of hope and hospitality in our beloved country and our dear world.



Mary E. Hunt, Diann L. Neu: Co-directors | Anali Martin: Intern | Hannah Dorfman, Emily Neufeld: Staff | Joe Scinto: Volunteer

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December Litany of Gift-Giving

By Diann L. Neu

Place in front of you a piece of ribbon to represent the gifts that you have given and received. Let it symbolize the gifts many still need. Pray:

For those who have supported me throughout my life, the gift of gratitude to you.
 For friends who share joys and sorrows, the gift of friendship to you.
 For colleagues with whom I network and collaborate, the gift of solidarity to you.
 For the people living in conflict, the gift of peace to you.
 For those living with cancer or Covid-19, and those who are sick, the gift of healing to you.
 For people in despair, the gift of hope to you.
 For families divided by differences, the gift of reconciliation to you.
 For children of every race and country, the gift of love and justice to you.
 For those who are made homeless, the gift of shelter to you.
 For those who are hungry, especially children, the gift of food and security to you.
 For those who are without paid jobs, the gift of meaningful, remunerated work to you.
 For those who are dying this day, the gift of a peaceful passing to you.
 For newborns, the gift of life to you.
 For those who experience discrimination in any form, the gift of justice to you.
 For world leaders, the gift of vision for the global community to you.
 For the women who experience violence from war, rape, and religion, the gift of safety to you.
 For young girls growing up today, the gift of empowerment to you.

Put your prayer into the ribbon. Give it to the universe by tying it onto a package, tree or wreath, or share it with a friend.

May you give and receive the gifts that you and the world need. Amen. Ashe. Let It Be So.

© 2020 Diann L. Neu is Co-founder and Co-director of Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER), dneu@hers.com



Fall 2020 WATER Program Highlights

By Anali North Martin

You can find audio, notes, and scripts of our programs, at www.waterwomensalliance.org. Register for upcoming events on our website or email waterstaff@hers.com. All programs are over Zoom.

WATERtalks



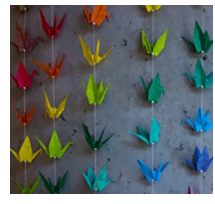
In September, **Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite** presented "Feminist Theology as Performance Art: Confronting White Supremacy Through Fiction" about her book *When Demons Float*, a third novel starring protagonist Kristin Ginelli, "Chicago-cop-turned-religion-professor."



In October, **Traci C. West** talked about her book *Solidarity and Defiant Spirituality: Africana Lessons on Religion, Racism, and Ending Gender Violence*. She explained what it means to listen to, learn from, and stand in solidarity with Africana cultures in the global cause to end gender violence while embodying the intersection of race, religion, sexuality, and gender.

WATERrituals

In September, **Diann L. Neu** and **Anali North Martin** invited us to "Pray for Peace on Earth." Centered on the peace crane, we remembered historic peacemakers and prayed for peace across the globe.



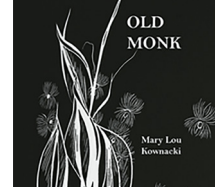
In October, **Diann L. Neu** and **Anali North Martin** led us in "Preparing for the Voting Outcome." We took a collective breath, shared our hopes and anxieties, stormed the heavens with prayer, and promised to support one another through a historic fight for democracy.



WATERmeditations



In September, **Mary E. Hunt** guided us in a meditation to reflect on "Compassion: Moral Imagination at Work." Her pondering served to deepen our imaginations and remind us to keep them active in order to work for radical, compassionate change.



In October, **Cheryl Nichols** asked, "What Will Be the Epitaph?" She read "Poem 26" from Mary Lou Kownacki's *Old Monk*, leading us to reflect on letting go of the goal and focusing on the pursuit, putting effort before outcome, persistence before result.

WATERteas

In September, **Mary E. Hunt** led our tea on the topic "Thriving for the Long Haul." Starting a new season of teas, we discussed how to thrive in this time of Covid-19 and address systemic violence, looking at our long-term goals to plan for future program topics.



In October, **Sheila Curran** (Ireland), **Rosemary Ganley** (Canada), **Cynthia Moe-Lobeda** (U.S.), and **Sally Timmel** (U.S./South Africa) spoke of "Creating a New Economic Order," the possibilities and strategies for macro, micro, international, local, and personal levels of systemic economic change.



A Joyful WATERtalk with Theresa Kane and Christine Schenk

By Anali North Martin

On Wednesday, November 4, 2020, the day after the U.S. Election Day with results still trickling in, we had an invigorating and joyful WATERtalk with Theresa Kane, RSM, and Christine Schenk, CSJ, the author of *To Speak the Truth in Love, A Biography of Theresa Kane, RSM*.

After Chris laid out the contours of Theresa's historical October 7, 1979 welcome to Pope John Paul II in Washington, DC, it was clear from her own words and the stories of others that Theresa is grounded in both the Spirit and her community. "I am the church, and you are the church," she said. "I'm convinced that the closer we are to one another, and the more we have a sense of respect and care for one another, the closer we are to God." The Spirit has prompted her in steadfastly speaking truth to willing and unwilling audiences alike, and she follows without regrets or fear.

The program was instructive and inspiring, and it was also a time of reunion and reminiscing. Women reconnected with one another, describing years of merriment, mischief, and resolute effort to work to reimagine and change the institutional Roman Catholic Church and to create other forms of church, like the women-church movement, since changes are slow to non-existent.

Even after the meeting drew to a close, our time with Theresa and Chris did not end as story-telling and laughter continued. Theresa's contagious merriment stayed with us along with her words, "I want to be who I am called to be."

WATERcollaboration

Diann L Neu lectured for "The Humble Gathering" of **Christian Feminists Today** on her book, *Stirring WATERS: Feminist Liturgies for Justice*. She talked with Carolivia Herron on **Epic City Radio** about *Stirring WATERS*. She is convenor of the Spirituality Committee for the Providence Associates of St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana. She is on the liturgy planning committee of the **Women's Ordination Conference (WOC)** to "Commemorate WOC's 45 Years of Prophetic Persistence."

Mary E. Hunt lectured for **San Francisco Dignity** on "Catholics in 2020: The Test of Our Times" and for the **Global Network of Rainbow Catholics** on "Catholic Is As Catholic Does." She wrote "After the Smoke Clears: Insights and Challenges from Feminist Catholicism," in *Crisis and Challenge in the Roman Catholic Church: Perspectives on Decline and Reformation*, ed. by Debra Meyers and Mary Sue Barnett, 2020, and "The Power of Silence in the Work of Justice: Feminist Catholicism in Action," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 36.1 (2020). Mary shaped sign-on documents: "Catholic Scholars and Faith Leaders in the U.S. Challenge State Department's Commission Draft on the Report on Unalienable Rights," 21 July 2020, and "An Open Letter to Catholic Voters and All Voters for Justice in the United States from **Women-Church Convergence**," July 2020.



In Memory of Her

Dr. Virginia Ramey Mollenkott
 January 28, 1932 - September 25, 2020

The Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER) joins family and friends, the Evangelical and Ecumenical Women's Caucus/Christian Feminism Today, and the Sisterly Conversations group at Kirkridge in mourning the death of our beloved friend and colleague Dr. Virginia Ramey Mollenkott.

Her long and unique life of committed scholarship, activism, and faithful witness made her a cherished member of many circles. She leaves a multitude of survivors. We at WATER appreciate her many contributions to the Alliance and we reverence her name.

Dissertations will be written about Virginia's influential books, including her extensive consideration of the female nature of the divine, same-sex love, and transgender life. She was a scholar of John Milton and brought her considerable skills at textual analysis to Hebrew and

Christian scriptures. She worked to make the language of Christianity more inclusive, the spirituality more palatable, and the whole enterprise more welcoming. As a pioneer on LGBTQI+ issues, and especially coming from an evangelical starting point, Virginia opened many doors and minds.

One of her many contributions to the field of feminist studies in religion was Virginia's bridgebuilding between evangelical women and others who take a more philosophical approach to faith. She was a fearless critic of small-minded church officials, a stalwart advocate for justice on many fronts. She led the way when the way was not clear to many others.

She was also a wonderfully supportive mentor and friend to countless people. Stories abound of how her care and friendship saved people from the throes of despair, the brink of self-destruction. Such a learned companion in struggle is a great blessing.

Anne Linstatter offers a lovely obituary at <https://marthaymaria.blogspot.com>. Virginia's website <https://www.virginiamollenkott.com/> is a rich resource of information about her life and work.

WATER will miss our dear friend and colleague. Her books line our shelves; her life gladdens our hearts. Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, Presente!