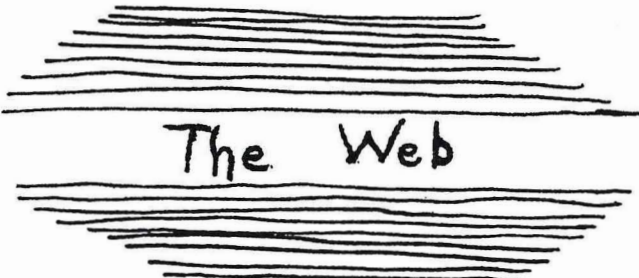


1987



The Web

WOMEN AND RELIGION COMMITTEE - PSWD

TENTH ANNIVERSARY

WOMEN AND RELIGION RESOLUTION

In June 1977, the General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association unanimously passed an herstoric resolution affecting the status of all UU women and challenging the very principles, language and theological assumptions of our movement. In honor of the tenth anniversary of this Resolution the Women and Religion Committee of the Pacific Southwest District presents The Web. We hope that in time it will spin forth the feminist dialogue and change in our movement, not only in this district but across the continent.

Lucile Schuck Longview of Lexington, MA wrote the first draft of the Women and Religion Resolution and sent it to friends around the denomination in January 1977. She explained her purpose in the following way:

"To date we have a dozen or so resolutions in the UAA which concern women in one way or another. These resolutions still need to be used more effectively and we can work together on one or more aspects of abortion, child care, health care, rights and opportunities for Women, Older Women, etc.

"None of the above however relate to the role which religious myth and teaching plays in the marginalization of women. It is the great, untouched area.

"At this particular time there is a great need for leadership in calling attention to the fact that, of the major obstacles to equality shared by women everywhere,

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religions and the attitudes, prejudices and assumptions which they perpetuate stand high on the list." (Reaching Sideways, Autumn 86)

Later the same month she sent the proposed resolution to a longer list of people across the continent urging them to obtain certified signatures so that the resolution could be introduced at General Assembly. The Joseph Priestly District amended the resolution and submitted 548 signatures from 57 societies. Lucile and the Lexington, MA group who had promoted the original resolution decided to support and promote the JPD-amended version. According to Lucile.

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"Both the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation at Biennial in Chicago and the UUA Board of Trustees at its consideration of resolutions were lobbied and both voted to support the amended version of the W & R Resolution." (Reaching Sideways, Autumn 86)

The resolution thus received broad-based support and, with a

final resolve added on the floor of the GA, was passed unanimously. It is important to remember that the Resolution did have such broad-based support because after only ten years there is already some confusion and disagreement about who first introduced or initiated the Resolution and for what reasons. (See Reaching Sideways Spring 86 and Autumn 86)

WOMEN AND RELIGION

WHEREAS, a principle of the Unitarian Universalist Association is to "affirm, defend, and promote the supreme worth and dignity of every human personality, and the use of the democratic method in human relationships"; and

WHEREAS, great strides have been taken to affirm this principle within our denomination; and

WHEREAS, some models of human relationships arising from religious myths, historical materials, and other teachings still create and perpetuate attitudes that cause women everywhere to be overlooked and undervalued; and

WHEREAS, children, youth and adults internalize and act on these cultural models, thereby tending to limit their sense of self-worth and dignity;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: That the 1977 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association calls upon all Unitarian Universalists to examine carefully their own religious beliefs and the extent to which these beliefs influence sex-role stereotypes within their own families; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the General Assembly urges the Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Universalist Association to encourage the Unitarian Universalist Association administrative officers and staff, the religious leaders within societies, the Unitarian Universalist theological schools, the directors of related organizations, and the planners of seminars and conferences, to make every effort to: (a) put traditional assumptions and language in perspective, and (b) avoid sexist assumptions and language in the future.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the General Assembly urges the President of the Unitarian Universalist Association to send copies of this resolution to other denominations, examining sexism inherent in religious literature and institutions and to the International Association of Liberal Religious Women and the IARF (International Association for Religious Freedom); and

related to the psychological needs of modern women. I had been impressed with Carol Christ's speech at the Goddess Conference, "Why Women Need the Goddess," and decided to use it as the starting point for my course. My intention was to relate women's own lives to the historical content. That is why every session is experiential as well as intellectual, and issues of body image, mother-daughter relationships, power and conflict emerge.

The title? I stole it right out of the Bible. In the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, God speaks to Jeremiah saying "Do you not see what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead the dough to make cakes to the Queen of Heaven and to pour out libations to other gods, in order to anger me!" (Jer. 7:17-18) Jeremiah warned his people that if they did not stop this worship of the Queen of Heaven a terrible catastrophe would occur. Of course the catastrophe did happen and they were driven into exile in Egypt. There Jeremiah reminds them of his

warning saying that their exile is punishment for their worship of the Queen of Heaven. But the people interpret the catastrophe in the opposite way. Their answer to Jeremiah is "As for the word that you have spoken to us in the name of Yahweh, we shall not listen to you. But we shall without fail do everything as we said: we shall burn incense to the Queen of Heaven, and shall pour her libations as we used to do, we, our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. For then we had plenty of food, and we all were well and saw no evil. But since we ceased burning incense to the Queen of Heaven and to pour her libations, we have wanted everything and have been consumed by sword and famine." (Jer. 44:16-18) It seemed a fitting source for the title to a curriculum on feminist theology.

We had a wonderful affirming weekend at Palo Alto and we look forward to sharing our learnings with each of you.

-Shirley Ann Ranck

LOGO CONTEST

You may forget but
Let me tell you
this: someone in
some future time
will think of us

- Sappho
6th century
B.C.E.

The PSWD Women and Religion Committee needs a logo.

Are you artistic? Here is your chance to design an exciting symbol for our Committee!

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Deadline: September 15, 1987

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implications of the Resolution. The district task force or committee has sometimes developed Sunday services emphasizing women's needs and contributions. The Pacific Central District Task Force has published its own worship materials, dramatizations and poetry. The Joseph Priestly District has established a continental journal of dialogue on feminist issues within the denomination.

The UU Women's Federation has played a strong role in implementing the Resolution, sponsoring conferences and workshops on feminist theology and working for a more adequate valuing of the work women contribute to local congregations.

As this new decade begins the District Women and Religion Committee focuses directly upon the mandates; in the Resolution and strategies to address them. "Whereas, some models of human relationships arising from religious myths, historical materials, and other teaching still

create and perpetuate attitudes that cause women everywhere to be overlooked and undervalued." (Section 3, Women and Religion Resolution.)

We work to apply what has been learned from studying women. We rename a demeaning label, dependency, as womens' relationality. We attend to behavior which supports engendered arrangements in our societies and institutional organizations. Conflict arises as we promote change.

Ten years later there are still many sexist assumptions to be confronted. Sexist language continues in our pulpits and in the anthems sung by choirs. Women ministers still do not fill half our pulpits even though they have made up half of the student body at our theological schools for at least ten years. Implementing the Women and Religion Resolution is a long range project. On this tenth anniversary let us re-dedicate ourselves to the task.

**FOUR WOMEN FROM PSWD
ATTEND CAKES FOR THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN
TRAINING SEMINAR**

They knew we were coming so they baked a cake, a big one with an elegant queen on top and the words CAKES FOR THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN. "They" were the women and men of the Palo Alto Unitarian Church. On the weekend of February 19-21, they welcomed women from all over the continent to a training seminar for district leaders on the use of the new feminist theology curriculum published last year by the UUA. Four PSWD women attended: Helen Bishop, Carmen Drucker, Susie Silva and Shirley Ranck, author of the curriculum. These women will in turn train leaders in our own district. Dates of the district training sessions will be announced in the next issue of The Web.

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Let me tell you about Cakes. For me it all began back in 1977 when I attended a conference in Santa Cruz entitled The Great Goddess Re-emerging. There were presentations of the highest calibre on art history, literature, theology and mythology. There was dancing and chanting and singing and a powerful, infectious enthusiasm about our female religious heritage. I returned to my studies at Starr King School wanting to know more. I felt as if I had to reclaim my roots as a woman. When Rev. Leslie Westbrook, Minister for Women and Religion on the UUA staff in Boston asked me in 1980 to write a study guide in feminist theology, I had already collected many materials.

The curriculum carries my name but it is really the manifestation of a vision shared by many women. I think the vision took shape as women studied the religion that was offered in theological schools or in departments of religious studies, and then in our spare time read the works of Mary Daly, Rosemary Reuther, Marlin Stone, Naomi Goldenberg and many others. Waves of anger and sadness washed over us as we began to perceive the relentless patriarchal bias that was at the core of all the major world religions. Waves of passion and excitement and hope followed as we began to dig out the mythologies and the artifacts of female divinities and the deeds and writings of women through the ages.

The outlines of a gigantic task began to emerge: the reclaiming of female religious history and prehistory. The task was compelling not only because of its importance to women but because it would put male-dominated religions

in perspective. We saw that half of human experience, that of women, had been ignored in the theologies we were taught. We began to wonder what kind of theology would emerge if women's lives and experience were used as the basis for theologizing.

The task we envisioned was overwhelming: to reclaim and interpret the religious heritage and experience of half of humanity. It was not only the size of the project that seemed awesome. Researching female religious history was peculiar. You could not just go look up the topic in a library because the topic did not exist. You had to guess what other topics might lead you to some information that might be useful. It was a matter of piecing together a sentence from one book, a paragraph from another, and pictures from everywhere. It was finding whole volumes of goddess mythology and hymns gathering dust on the most remote library shelves. Was our vision of seeing it whole really an illusion, mere wishful thinking? We actually wondered sometimes if we were crazy. But nothing, not criticism, not put-downs, not even our own doubts could keep us from the task. I personally received enormous encouragement from women at the Center for Women and Religion at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, and from the women of the Pacific Central District Women and Religion Task Force. As the materials accumulated, the question was where to begin, how to carve out a manageable project.

As a psychologist I was very much interested not only in the history, the rituals, the myths of Goddess religion but also in how it all

related to the psychological needs of modern women. I had been impressed with Carol Christ's speech at the Goddess Conference, "Why Women Need the Goddess," and decided to use it as the starting point for my course. My intention was to relate women's own lives to the historical content. That is why every session is experiential as well as intellectual, and issues of body image, mother-daughter relationships, power and conflict emerge.

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CALL FOR NEWS AND ARTICLES

The Web needs your ideas, and your news of women's progress in churches and fellowships.

Have you finally achieved gender-inclusive language in your Sunday services? Share your joy with your sisters and brothers through The Web.

Have you written a poem or found a reading you feel expresses an important aspect of women's religious experience? Please share it with us in The Web.

Are you involved in a conflict or struggle to bring about change for women? Call on all of us for support through The Web.

Do you have an idea for a short article on feminist theology? Write it for The Web.

Is there a powerful woman who has worked for change in your church, and could you write a feature article about her? Do it for The Web.

Make The Web a strong voice for women in this district and across the continent.

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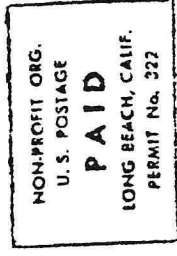
The mountain-moving day is coming
I say so, yet others doubt
Only a while the mountain sleeps
In the past
All mountains moved in fire
Yet you may not believe it
Oh, man, this alone believe
All sleeping women now will awake and move.

JOSIE J/LVH

The Web

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Address Correction Requested