

"Structures, Accountability & Transparency: Third CWC International Meeting"
hosted by Catholic Women's Council: Asia, May 10, 2022
Diann Neu on behalf of CWC North America

Greeting from the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual, WATER; from the Women-Church Convergence in the Americas, and from Sisters against Sexism, SAS, my women-church liturgical community in the Washington, DC area.

I am Diann Neu, cofounder and codirector with Mary E. Hunt of WATER; a cofounder of Women-Church Convergence; a core member of SAS.

What do women hope for from their church?
What needs to change?

We expect a church that fully includes us in every aspect of its life to address the needs of the church and the world – with power to vote; with accountability and transparency on how decisions are generated, transmitted, and analyzed; with power and voice in every leadership role from deacons to bishops to popes and others. We try to live that now in our issue-focused groups, coalitions, and base communities.

Women are church. We call the institutional church to change by including women and non-clerics in every aspect of church life, especially decision-making.

We expect a church that images God as a Divine Creator who is beyond gender and race, the embodiment of Divine Love.

Women image God. We call the institutional church to change by using inclusive language for the Divine and humanity in all readings, songs, documents, proclamations, liturgies, and sacraments.

We expect a church where we celebrate Eucharist and take action for justice.

Women have created Inclusive Eucharistic Communities. We call the institutional church to change by recognizing women, married men, and non-binary people as already called forth and "ordained" by their communities, and to support them financially.

What issues do we have to deal with?
Let me name three.

Ministry: 50 years ago, many women were trained for ordination in the Roman Catholic Church, and yet there is no place in the institutional structure for us to share our God-given gifts. Women listened to the needs and responded. Mary E. Hunt and I cofounded WATER as our way to fulfill our calls. The Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual is an international

center for dialogue on feminism, faith, and justice. It is a resource for people who need ministry, especially Catholics who have been betrayed by sexually abusive clerics.

Justice: People from dozens of countries join WATER's monthly Zoom programs. Recently we discussed the 2021 documentary "Rebel Hearts" which tells the story of the Immaculate Heart Community. Fifty years ago, a canonical religious community refused to capitulate to the demands of a patriarchal Roman Catholic Church in Los Angeles. The cardinal fired them from the schools in his archdiocese. Now they are a diverse community of people engaged in social justice work.

Like many women who have been excommunicated or put under interdict, the Immaculate Heart Sisters modeled bravery. We call the institutional church to lift all excommunications, interdicts, doctrinal assessments against women, apologize for them, and stop them forever.

Eucharist: In 1983 Women-Church Convergence, a coalition of more than 22 autonomous Catholic-rooted women's groups, came into being after the historic gathering in Chicago, "From Generation to Generation: Woman Church Speaks." As Mary Hunt wrote: "It was after this event, where many of us, myself included, felt as if for the first time in our adult lives we were church."

Women-church celebrates Eucharist and deals with issues like racial justice; women's equality; respect and justice for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities; reproductive justice; inclusive ministry; standing in solidarity with refugee, immigrant, and indigenous communities; and so much more.

Yes, we are church! We call the institutional church to recognize feminist ministries, to apologize for injustice toward women, to acknowledge women as Eucharistic leaders, and to support them financially.

We call the institutional church to change its teachings and practices toward women if the Catholic community is to have any women members in generations to come.

Divine Wisdom, transform the entire Catholic community into a welcoming, inclusive "discipleship of equals" of love, mercy, and justice. Amen. May it be so.