

South of the Garden

The Newsletter for the Resource Center for Women and Ministry in the South

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December 2010

Threads

by Jeanette Stokes

On Friday evening, November 19, several hundred people passed through St. Philip's Episcopal Church in Durham. As they ate, drank, and chatted with one another, they admired and remarked on the amazing quilts and other textile art in the hallways of the church. The exhibit that delighted so many that evening, "Strength from All My Roots," was organized by RCWMS in honor of the centennial of The Rev. Dr. Pauline (Pauli) Murray. RCWMS co-sponsored the exhibition with the Art Guild of St. Philip's Episcopal Church, and the Pauli Murray Project at Duke. The Mary Duke Biddle Foundation provided funding.

When people asked us why we chose to honor Pauli Murray in this way, we often answered that a patchwork quilt was a fitting metaphor for Murray's family history and her work life. From her book *Proud Shoes: The Story of an American Family*, we learn that Murray was descended from black, white, and Native American people. First published in the 1950s, the book reads as though it were written last week. She details her ancestors. One set of great grandparents included a white slaveholder in Orange County, NC who raped a woman enslaved to his family. The child born of that violent union was Murray's maternal grandmother, Cornelia Smith, who married Robert Fitzgerald, an educator who came to North Carolina after the civil war to aid the emerging black community. His parents were a bi-racial farming couple from Delaware and Maryland. No one wanted to discuss that kind of family history in 1950, not black people and not white people, but that didn't stop Murray from researching and writing a brilliant book about her not-so-unusual American family.

I've just finished reading Murray's autobiography, *Pauli Murray* (formerly published as *Song in a Weary Throat*) and am stunned by her brilliance, the obstacles she faced, and her perseverance. Murray was the first African American to apply to the Graduate School at UNC and was turned down because of her race. As a brilliant student and a descendant of people who had endowed the university, Murray thought she should be admitted to school, but no. She graduated from Howard Law School at the top of her class, which should have entitled her to a yearlong fellowship to Harvard Law School, but Harvard wouldn't take her because she was female. In her fifties, she earned an advanced law degree from Yale. Men who received the same degree got teaching jobs in the best law schools in the country, but law schools weren't yet open to having women on the faculty. Murray was eventually hired by Brandeis in 1968 to teach race and law in the undergraduate college, only to run headlong into students in the Black Power movement and find herself at odds with the very people she had designed her life to serve. She attended seminary in her sixties, was one of the first Episcopal women to be ordained, and was the very first African American woman ordained to the Episcopal priesthood.

Born in Baltimore, MD on November 20, 1910, Pauli Murray grew up with relatives in Durham, NC. That's why Durham has been celebrating her centennial this fall. Watch for Pauli Murray events throughout the coming year. To find more about the various threads of this remarkable woman's life, read *Proud Shoes* or *Pauli Murray*, Google her, or see paulimurrayproject.org.



Every Woman's Legacy, quilt by Nancy Cash

Elder Women

by Anita McLeod

Elder Women's Network: Connecting Circles of Women

More women are entering their sixties, seventies, and eighties with better health, higher levels of education, greater work experience, and more resources than ever before. We have choices our mothers and grandmothers never dreamed of, and we can now ask, as poet Mary Oliver asks in her poem *The Summer Day*, "What is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?" Each of us was born with a gift for the world, and as we grow older, the desire to share that gift grows more urgent.

The women of the feminist movement of the 1960s and 70s are now elder women. We have lived purposeful lives and want meaningful action to continue to be our central concern, but we don't want to go to more meetings or form new organizations. We want to focus our energy, joining together in community to lend our voices and actions to what we love and value.

Elder women are expressing deep concern for future generations and deep dismay over the declining health of our planet. Women who were inspired and changed by the feminist movement are leading the way, and many are looking to the indigenous women of the world for wisdom and guidance. The archetype of the powerful wise old woman, which has been all too absent from the western world, is now rising in the land. My hope is that women will find community and support for their spiritual journeys as they work on behalf of their deepest concerns.

In the past twenty years, I have facilitated circles of women exploring healthy menopause, midlife issues, being over sixty, and creating soulful circles of support. Now, at the age of seventy, I want to connect these pieces. I am creating the Elder Women's Network as a project of RCWMS in order to offer women opportunities to bring the wisdom of their experience forward and join with others in having a positive impact on our world.

My goal is to inspire elder women to be a force for peace and justice, especially in North Carolina. Many elder women already contribute to local community organizations. An Elder Women's Network would encourage them further by linking them to other women doing similar work. As women can form small groups for action and reflection, the groups can be connected to one another through RCWMS. My hope is that women will find community and support for their spiritual journeys as they work on behalf of their deepest concerns.

The Elder Women's Network sponsored several events this year—two gatherings in October and several film showings. *When the Grandmothers Speak, the Earth Will Heal* was a day-long retreat at The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World at Timberlake Farms near Greensboro, NC. On a beautiful October morning, twenty-six women gathered in a circle in the sun-drenched living room of the farmhouse. Carolyn Toben and her staff led us through a morning of meditations, shared stories, and silent walks to affirm our personal connections to the earth. We ate an organic lunch outside on the porch with dappled sunlight shining through the trees. Many of us remembered being free to discover the forests, rivers, and creeks of our childhood, finding

(Continued on back.)

Calendar

December 9, 2010, Thursday, 7:00-8:30pm
"BEAUTIFUL YOU" Salon Party
Trinity Lofts, 708 W. Trinity Ave, Durham, NC.
Join NC author Rosie Molinary for an introduction to the spiritual tools used in her new book *Beautiful You: A Daily Guide to Radical Self-Acceptance*. The evening will include a reading from the book, guided reflection on the intersection of faith practices and body beliefs, and the sale and signing of copies of *Beautiful You*. Beverages and desserts will be served.
FREE and open to women of all ages.
RSVP: Erin Lane, elanebeam@gmail.com, 919-407-0067

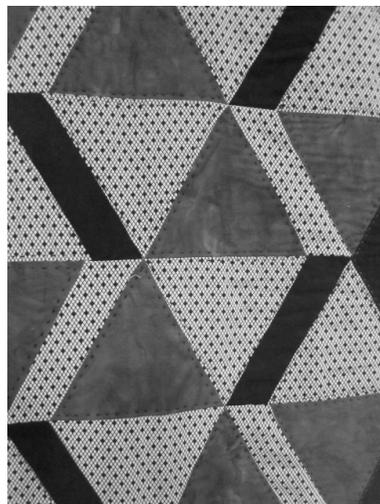
December 12, 2010, Sunday, 7:00 pm
INTERFAITH WINTER CELEBRATION for
COMMUNITY, SPIRIT, and CHANGE
Beth El Synagogue, 1004 Watts St., Durham, NC
Service will include highlights from life, witness, and ministry of the Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray.
All are welcome. Bring a candle.
Cost: \$5-10, suggested donation
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

December 30, 2010-January 2, 2011
INTERPLAY NEW YEAR'S UNTENSIVE
The Summit Retreat Center near Greensboro, NC
A New Year's InterPlay retreat in a beautiful setting with time to dance, sing, tell stories, eat, have fun, rest, reflect on the old year and anticipate the new.
Cost: \$210 for room & board plus donation for leaders.
Contact: Ginny, 919-821-3723, interplaync@nc.rr.com

January 2-9, 2011
WEEK OF QUIET & WRITING FOR WOMEN
Trinity Center, near Morehead City, NC
An unstructured week of writing for women with quiet days and conversation in the evenings.
Cost: \$690
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

January 22, 2011, Saturday, 9:30 am-4:30 pm
FINDING YOUR VOICE
Durham, NC
Writing is equal parts discovery, creation, and editing. We can get stuck when we try to play all these roles at once. The inner critic, so valuable at editing time, can squelch creativity if we listen too soon. Come learn how to manage your inner critic and uncover your authentic creative voice. Short readings and writing exercises will jumpstart your creative process. Share your writing in a safe, supportive environment. Take away techniques that will breathe more creativity into your writing, and your life.
Leader: Alison Jones is a writer and radio producer based in Durham, N.C. Her work has appeared on National Public Radio, and in a wide range of newspapers and magazines.
Cost: \$95
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

February 5, Saturday, 2011
ENNEAGRAM workshop with Sandra Smith
Durham, NC
The Enneagram Personality System offers a map of nine personality types, their perspectives and blind spots and the direction for individual growth and transformation. Life is a journey to the divine heart and we have different paths and specific barriers depending on our personality type.
Leader: Sandra Smith, M.Div., teaches the Enneagram throughout the southeast as a tool for personal, professional, and spiritual growth. A certified Enneagram trainer, she is the founder of Holy Ground, a nonprofit that was in Asheville.
Cost: \$100
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com



Detail of *Flash of Spirit: African Design #2*,
quilt by Jereann King Johnson

February 17-20, 2011
FINDING YOUR MEDIUM: A Weekend of Art at the
Beach with Sue Sneddon
The Boat House, Emerald Isle, NC
"I can't draw a straight line." Well who said you should? Isn't it time to pack up some art supplies and head to the beach? Sue Sneddon will be in residence at The Boat House on Emerald Isle for a weekend of exploration into various media for painting and drawing. These will include: pencil, pen and ink, charcoal, pastel, oil pastel, watercolor, gouache, and acrylics. Let's find the ones that float your boat! Bring any art supplies you'd like.
Leader: Sue Sneddon has been a full-time painter since 1984. Much of her work has concentrated on the ocean, especially the NC coast.
Cost: Workshop, \$325. Housing at The Boat House, \$125 double or \$225 single. Food will be a joint effort. You may arrange your own housing.
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

March 3, 2011, Thursday
WOMEN'S LABYRINTH WALK & POTLUCK
Groce UMC, Asheville, NC
Walks at 4:30 and 7:00 pm, potluck at 6:00 pm
Leader: Jeanette Stokes
Cost: Sliding scale: \$10-20
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

March 25-26, 2010, Fri. 7-9 pm & Sat. 9:30 am-3:30 pm
A REFLECTIVE WRITING WORKSHOP with Carol
Henderson
Durham, NC
Leader: Carol Henderson teaches writing workshops and coaches writers at every skill level, in the U.S., Europe, and the Middle East. She has published columns, reviews, essays, and feature stories. Her memoir, *Losing Malcolm: A Mother's Journey Through Grief*, is a redemptive story about losing a baby and learning how to live again. Currently, she is editing several essay anthologies and memoirs. She lives in Chapel Hill, NC. Learn more about her: www.carolhenderson.com
Cost: \$125
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

April 12, 2011, Tuesday, 9:00 am-6:00 pm
LABYRINTH WALK AT DUKE CHAPEL
Duke Chapel, Duke University, Durham, NC
Walk the RCWMS Labyrinth.
Free and open to the public.
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com, or
Duke Chapel

April 17-22, 2010
ECUMENICAL HOLY WEEK LABYRINTH WALK
Binkley Baptist Church, Chapel Hill, NC
Sponsors: Several Chapel Hill churches
Free and open to the public.
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

May 8-15, 2011
WEEK OF QUIET & WRITING FOR WOMEN
Trinity Center, near Morehead City, NC
An unstructured week of writing for women with quiet days and conversation in the evenings.
Cost: about \$700
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

September 25–October 2, 2011
WEEK OF QUIET & WRITING FOR WOMEN
Trinity Center, near Morehead City, NC
An unstructured week of writing for women with quiet days and conversation in the evenings.
Cost: about \$700
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

Young ♀

by Erin Lane

Ever since I was an undergraduate at Davidson College, my vocational tagline has been “building bridges between faith and feminism.” Cue the hokey advertising jingle and pan to women of all ages, races, and sizes embracing one another in hearty (if unexplained) laughter. Add a man and a child in the picture for political correctness. But one grows weary of her call and the routine way in which it is expressed. A freshly minted divinity school student, I am searching for a new tune. The lyrics haven’t changed but I need the melodious hum of my environment to carry me through these next few years of exploration.

Durham is miles away from my most recent home among the bright city lights of the San Francisco Bay Area. But it is ripe with a whole slew of women who are asking the challenging question of how faith and feminism can continue to nurture the next generation of young women leaders.

Christi Brown, Managing Director of Leadership Education at Duke Divinity, is an ordained Presbyterian minister who believes in the power of solidarity. “I think a lot of young clergy women might feel quite isolated. The whole female aspect adds to this when you are in your first call or an early call. You don’t know everything but you feel like you’re expected to.” For her part, Christi has made it a point to meet regularly with other Presbyterian female pastors in the area for breakfast, devotion, and emotional check-ins. Christi asserts, “A group gives you a confidential way on how to handle things, a way to call on each other.”

The lack of connection for young women in ministry can be one of the quickest ways to ensure burnout. In 2008, the Institute for Women’s Policy Research conducted a report entitled, “Healers of Our Time: Women, Faith, and Justice: A Mapping Report” with the support of The Sister Fund and the Women in Theology and Ministry program at Emory University.

I was struck by one of the thoughts in the document’s concluding section. It read, “Our research reveals that the work of enhancing women’s agency—their amazing ability to effect change—is alive and well. What we need now is to join hands and ideas, concerns and hopes, diagnoses and dreams, words and actions, strategies and wisdom, prayers and courage.” It was clear the work of women, religion, and activism was being done, just as it was equally clear that those doing the work were often without the time, resources, and know-how to find meaningful collaborations.

Twenty-four-year-old Katherine Hester, a first year MDiv student from Wilmington, NC, echoed this sentiment when asked what she “needed” in order to be a successful woman in ministry. “Relationship is at the heart of all reconciliation and growth. If we can find ways to celebrate women and facilitate opportunities for people to grow in relationship with women pastors, I think this will most genuinely and authentically create a paradigm shift.”

Twenty-seven-year-old Goodwyn Bell, another first year MDiv student from Memphis, TN, concurred. “I desire more mentoring from women in ministry, particularly from women who embrace both the scholarly and relational aspects of ministry.”

But solidarity alone will not erase the years of explicit and implicit prejudice still emanating through the opaque windows of our churches. Women must exercise their power. And visibly.

I worked in the book publishing industry for the last three years before coming to graduate school. Religion



Pauli's Vision—Simone's Reality,
quilt by Marjorie Diggs Freeman

was one of the categories for which I was responsible. While there were an incredible number of women contributing to the conversation on faith and culture, I realized few were gaining credibility like the popular Christian authors Rob Bell, Donald Miller, and Shane Claiborne. Sure, everyone I knew loved Anne Lamott. But she was no spring chicken. Young women needed to see themselves in the picture, and we had few snapshots.

I latched on to this act of “seeing” women, not just “reading” women, as being integral to the continued survival of faith and feminism among subsequent generations. It seemed to me that one could self-select into reading a book on women and religion or on feminism and theology but that a seed would have had to already been planted to motivate the action. The seed would have to be a relationship, especially for those without access to books. And where better to start visibly exhibiting the power of women’s authoritative presence than in the pulpit? Especially for adolescent girls who may not have support from their family, school, or peers, the role of a female pastor is imperative to widening imaginations of their own potential for ministry.

During my last year in the Bay Area, I lead a biblical feminist book club for a group of intergenerational women in Berkeley. The youngest among us were eighteen-year-old, high school seniors who had a hunger for rich, faith-filled, intellectual discussion. One evening, we were discussing the need for more young women pastors in the church. One of the high school women, Lauren, explained why that wasn’t an option for her. She looked down at her chest and said plainly, “I have big boobs. No one would take me seriously. I’ve thought about it, for sure. But I’m blonde and I like make-up. I don’t look like a pastor.” We were stunned. Not only were we all members of a church who had not one but two women pastors on staff, but also Lauren’s own mother was an ordained minister. It wasn’t enough that Lauren felt supported by the older women in her life. It was that she didn’t see herself—a young, fashionable, sexual being—celebrated in church leadership.

When I spoke with thirty-four-year-old Ebony Grison, another fellow student of mine at Duke Divinity from the Bronx, she rattled off a list of things she wished she had more of as a young women in ministry: prayer, encouragement (cards, notes, phone calls/texts), and money (grants, scholarships, gifts). Then she paused. “Maybe to be taken seriously as a minister of the Gospel.”

Katherine goes further. “Because women in our society are so often seen as sexual objects, it is particularly difficult to figure out how to be both a holy and a sexual being, and to model this to the congregation or group you are serving. However, the beautiful thing about being in ministry, is that it is ultimately not about me—it’s about Christ.”

These young women will have an opportunity next August to experience both female solidarity and visible demonstrations of women’s leadership when the Young Clergywomen Project hosts their 2011 meeting in Durham. The membership group was organized in 2006 for women under 40-yrs old (who were ordained by 35) to provide a network of resources and connections for young women in ministry—a group that statistically gets burned out before its first decade of ministry is over. Christi Brown is excited to partner with the group and hopes its influence will touch young women like Katherine, Goodwyn, and Ebony who may not know exactly where their gifting falls but are heeding God’s call to leadership.

As for me, I’ve just got to keep humming, loudly and off-key, so that the chorus of women’s voices—young and old alike—will hear me and draw me into their clanking, jubilant fold.

Originally from Chicago, IL, Erin Lane is pursuing an M.T.S. degree at Duke Divinity in religion and media. She volunteers at the Resource Center for Women and Ministry.

Elder Women

solace and delight in the natural world. Since so many children today lack this intimate bond with the natural world, we explored ways to share our love for the earth with children. As we listened to the deep sounds of the woodlands with "the ears of a deer," many of us vowed to share this experience with the children in our lives. More about the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World: www.beholdnature.org.

Two weeks later, thirteen women came to my home to hear about the Nyanya Project from Bett Hargrave, a grandmother and former RCWMS board chair. Bett traveled to Kenya in 2009 with her three grown daughters to visit the Nyanya Project, which offers hope and support to African grandmothers who are raising their AIDS-orphaned grandchildren. Mary Martin Niepold, a journalism professor at Wake Forest University, started the project. While volunteering with children orphaned by AIDS in Kenya in 2006, Mary, a grandmother herself, asked, "Who is helping the grandmothers?" No one was. Grandmothers are raising over a million orphans in Kenya alone. These women, who receive no government aid, manage to support families of ten or more on as little as a dollar a day.

Mary used her own funds and contributions from friends to begin the Nyanya Project. When she asked the grandmothers what they needed, they said their grandchildren needed a preschool, so Nyanya helped build the school. Bett visited the first preschool in 2009 and returned home to form a grandmother circle in her hometown of Lexington, NC, and raise money for ongoing support. A second preschool opened in 2010. The women at my house were so inspired by what we heard that we made contributions to the project and began to think about forming our own giving circles. More on the Nyanya Project: www.nyanyaproject.org.

The Elder Women's Network has sponsored several showings of *For the Next 7 Generations* this year. The film features the International Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers, wise elders who teach us that we are connected to each other and to all living beings on the earth. My hope is that elder women who see the film will join in conversation afterward and be inspired to create circles of their own focused on common concerns. The support of like-minded women can empower women in these groups to take action on behalf of what they love. The councils can be connected to each other through the network, and I will be available to lead council/circle workshops. Anyone who wants to learn the council process can contact RCWMS. Circles of wise grandmothers can help to transform our society into a more peaceful and compassionate home. For more on the Elder Women's Network, go to www.rcwms.org. To join us, contact rcwmsnc.org.

Anita McLeod, RN, BSN has led workshops for the past twenty years on topics such as women's spirituality, wholistic menopause, managing change, and conscious aging. A former Board chair of RCWMS, she is the mother of four grown children and has five grandchildren.



Detail of *I Speak for the Human Race*, quilt by Marjorie Diggs Freeman. Inscription reads, "First African American female priest in the Episcopal Church."

Contest

ESSAY CONTEST

RCWMS is committed to supporting women as they find their voices and make them heard. Our 2011 Essay Contest is now open for submissions. Women eighteen years of age and older may submit previously unpublished nonfiction essays of 1400 words or less.

Essays should be inspired by Pauli Murray's idea of drawing strength from all our roots. They should focus on or exemplify issues embodied in Murray's life, work, witness, and ministry. For example, essays could focus on issues that lie at the intersections of faith, race, gender, or sexual orientation.

Prizes will be \$500 for first place, \$300 for second place, and \$200 for third place. The winning essay will be published in the RCWMS newsletter, *South of the Garden*, in March 2011. Winners will be notified by mail.

The limit is two essays per person. Submit four double-spaced copies of each essay. Previous winners and RCWMS Board members are not eligible. No sermons, please. No e-mail submissions. Manuscripts will not be returned. Do not put your name on your essay(s). Attach a cover letter with essay's title, your name, address, phone number, and e-mail. Submissions must be postmarked by January 15, 2011. Mail submissions: RCWMS Essay Contest, 1202 Watts St., Durham, NC 27701.

RCWMS

The Resource Center for Women and Ministry in the South is a thirty-three-year-old nonprofit dedicated to weaving feminism and spirituality into a vision of justice for the world. RCWMS sponsors workshops, conferences, and retreats on women, religion, creativity, spirituality, and social justice. The organization mentors and encourages young women, religious leaders, writers, and activists.

RCWMS appreciates contributions of time, energy, money, and stock. We are grateful for support from the Mary Duke Biddle Foundation, the Triangle Community Foundation, The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina, the Foundation for the Carolinas, and The Dallas Foundation. To make a financial contribution or to volunteer, contact RCWMS or visit www.rcwms.org.

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