

South of the Garden

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

Volume 34, Number 4

December 2013

News

by Jeanette Stokes

We had a hard freeze in Durham in mid-November. At my house, we picked the few remaining zinnias and the last green peppers before they turned to mush. Now it is December and the cold has set in, bringing with it a clearer view of the sky (often so blue in North Carolina.)

For a second year, the abundance of autumn was evident as a diversity of preaching women gathered for the NC Women's Preaching Festival. For this event, Trinity Avenue Presbyterian in Durham welcomed seventy women from around the state to explore and experience various forms of proclamation. RCWMS and the Duke Divinity Women's Center co-sponsored the two-day event. Lori Pistor, RCWMS board chair and one of the conference organizers said, "Highlights included a bountiful dinner punctuated by four sermons from different traditions, reflections on 'claiming our voices' by Jeanette Stokes, workshops by authors and preachers, conversations and new ideas, and the musical harmonies of women's voices. This grass roots event reaffirmed the strength and joy of women in ministry."

One conference session that has stayed with me was led by Rev. Tonya Verbal. Her style as a prophetess in the Holiness tradition was somewhat unfamiliar to me, and I marveled at the passion in her testimony. She shared a fervent message from her heart and quickened the energy in the room until it seemed to vibrate around us. She invited participants to come forward and pray with her, and the enduring image for me is of Rev. Verbal laying her hands on two quiet Quaker ministers. Though the women standing before us were from very different traditions, it struck me that their traditions were open to the presence and the movement of the Spirit in the moment.

Another delicious fruit of the season was our Art of Aging workshop led by gerontologist Lyndall Hare and Elder Women project director Anita McLeod. As sometimes happens with RCWMS events, an ongoing group has grown out of this workshop.

One of the participants, Heather Cramer had this to say, "The Art of Conscious Aging was a delight! Started by Anita McLeod as part of the Elder Women project in Durham, we will take turns offering topics for consideration as elder women. We had nine women at the first gathering and twenty at the one in November. I have to say that being in a room with other women in their 60s, 70s, and 80s is just the best ever. The laughter, wisdom, and gentle love were awesome. I believe I have found my 'tribe!'"

The group will meet monthly on the second Tuesday, 11:30 am-2:00 pm at Colony Hills Clubhouse, 3060 Colony Road, Durham, NC 27705. Upcoming dates are December 10, 2013, and January 14, 2014.

In November, RCWMS sponsored the launch party for *Talking Taboo*, which turned out to be a lively gathering and great fun. The book is a collection of forty essays by forty women under forty, edited by Erin Lane and Enuma Okoro. It was a delight to celebrate with so many young people, and a special treat for some of us way-over-forty-types. The book is available at local bookstores.



LNS/cpf

Voice

by Jeanette Stokes

["Finding, Claiming, and Lifting Up Our Voices" was the title of my remarks at the NC Women's Preaching Festival in Durham in October 2013. The following is loosely based on that presentation.]

For thousands of years, it has been a challenge for women to find our voices. Even today, women in this country, and certainly in the church, are continually finding our voices, losing our voices, and finding them again.

When I was a child, I thought I'd be a mother like my mother. The story didn't quite work out that way. I became a minister, a writer, and a nonprofit director. None of those precluded being a mother, but I never had or raised a child. Instead, I have spent my adult years speaking my mind, one way and another.

As a child, I didn't spend much time thinking about whether I had a voice or whether it was being heard. I didn't even notice when I, like most girls in the U.S., gave up speaking my mind somewhere around the age of twelve. (Thanks to *In a Different Voice* by Carol Gilligan for pointing out that loss.)

I graduated from high school in Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1969 and went off to college in Massachusetts totally unprepared for the social and political upheaval I'd encounter. My parents were Republicans, for God's sake. I hardly believed that what happened in Washington, DC had any effect on life in the middle of the country.

I went to a women's college, Smith. The first semester, our housemother served us tea. The second semester, the college closed before the end of the term, due to the general protests against the war in Vietnam. Professors were instructed to do the best they could in determining our grades.

Math was my major, but I also explored economics, psychology, theories about sexism, and gender differences in attitudes and behaviors. I spent my senior year at Amherst, still a men's college at that point, and had my only conversion experience. One crisp fall day, I crossed the Amherst quad, kicking up leaves and thinking how lucky I was to have all these men to myself. Suddenly, I heard what I was saying and stopped dead in my tracks. What? The reading I had been doing on women in society finally began to sink in. I stood still and reconsidered. Who have been my faithful friends? Men and boys? My father had left when I was twelve, and boyfriends came and went. Women and girls had always been my best support. In that moment, I turned my attention in the direction of women. I promised to pay more attention to women, to listen to them, to value them, and to stop over-valuing men.

When I graduated in 1973, women my age went off to graduate schools and professional schools in larger numbers than ever before, as I would in another year.

(Continued inside.)

Calendar

* = RCWMS events. For registration form and more information: www.rcwms.org.

December 1–28, 2013

ILLUMINATED 2013: An Online Journey into the Heart of Advent & Christmas

with Jan Richardson & Garrison Doles

Go through Advent with artist/author Jan Richardson, singer/songwriter Garrison Doles, and others who want a season with mindfulness and grace. Includes reflection, art, music, community, and elegant simplicity as you journey toward Christmas. Cost: \$90 for individuals; group rates available.

Contact: janrichardson.com

December 8, 2013, Sunday, 1:00–5:00 pm

HOLIDAY SALE

1202 Watts Street, Durham, NC

Come by to visit, to look at our art, and to buy great gifts. Handmade cards, jewelry, books, and other art. Bring friends and family.

Contact: Jeanette, 919-683-1236

*December 14, 2013, Saturday, 7:00 pm

INTERFAITH CELEBRATION for Community, Spirit, & Change

Beth El Synagogue, corner of Watts St. and Markham Ave., Durham, NC

All are welcome. Bring a candle.

Suggested donation: \$5-10

Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

*January 3–10, 2014

WEEK OF QUIET & WRITING FOR WOMEN

Pelican House, Trinity Center, near Morehead City, NC

Come spend a week of quiet and writing with a supportive group of women in Pelican House, at the beautiful Trinity Center on Emerald Isle, NC. The house is silent in the daytime so we can read, write, or rest. In the evenings we gather to reflect on the day and often share our work with one another. Room and meals are included. Everyone gets her own room.

Cost: \$750, includes lodging and meals.

Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

*February 1, 2014, Saturday, 9:00 am–1:00 pm

FIND THE SLEEP YOU ONLY DREAM OF: A Sounder Sleep System® Workshop

5 Vilcom Center Dr., Chapel Hill, NC 27514, 2nd floor

“More than 40 million people—roughly one-third of working Americans—[are] not getting enough shut-eye.” (The Wall Street Journal, May 19, 2013, CDC statistics).

Busy lives, stressful work, or simply becoming older can make it more difficult to sleep well. If you struggle to fall asleep or easily resume sleep, this workshop offers information, hope and, best of all, experiential resting!

The workshop will enable you to better understand the structure of sleep and the variable patterns of brain and body. Based on this understanding you will receive instruction in Sounder Sleep® practices, to help you create more peaceful awake time, a more pleasurable approach to sleep, and more restful and restorative sleep. (Sounder Sleep® and Sounder Sleep System® are Registered Trademarks of Michael Krugman.)

Leader: Betty Wolfe, M.Div., BCB, GCFPcm Authorized Sounder Sleep System® Teacher

Cost: \$40. Scholarships available. (Workshop made possible in part by a Kalliopeia Foundation grant.)

Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

February 13, 2014, 12:30 pm

THE JILL RAITT LECTURE

Duke Divinity School, Durham, NC

Lecturer: Rev. Dr. Serene Jones, President, Union Theological Seminary in New York City

Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com



*February 21–24, 2014

MAKING YOUR ART: An Advanced Workshop with

Sue Sneddon

Emerald Isle, NC

This workshop is designed for those who have taken Sue Sneddon's "Finding Your Medium" and now want to find their own personal expression.

Leader: Sue Sneddon has been a full-time painter since 1984. Much of her work has concentrated on the ocean, especially the NC coast, where she now lives.

Cost: Workshop, \$325. Housing in beautiful beach house, \$125 double or \$225 single. Food is a joint effort.

Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

*February 28–March 2, 2014, Fri. 2:00 pm–Sun. 2:00 pm

FINDING YOUR MEDIUM: A Weekend of Art at the Beach with Sue Sneddon

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, acrylics, and some mixed media options. Let's find the ones that float your boat! Sue will provide all art supplies needed for the workshop. You may also bring any art supplies you have.

Leader: Sue Sneddon (See February 21–24.)

Cost: Workshop, \$300. Housing in beautiful beach house, \$125 double or \$225 single. Food is a joint effort.

Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

*March 14–15, 2014, Fri., 7–9 pm; Sat., 9:30 am–3:30 pm

SHORT TAKES ON THE SELF: Writing Workshop with Carol Henderson

Colony Hills Clubhouse, 3060 Colony Rd., Durham, NC

Through carefully selected prompts, we will explore watershed moments, life themes, and the evolution of our sense of self. We will plumb memory, dreams, and point of view—using what we unearth to write more deeply, find far-reaching meaning, and create compelling stories and essays. Be prepared to write a lot! Workshop is open to writers in all genres and all levels of experience. Open to men and women.

Leader: Carol Henderson is a writer and editor

Cost: \$125

Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

*March 18, 2014, Tuesday

LABYRINTH WALK AT DUKE CHAPEL

Duke Chapel, Duke University, Durham, NC

Walk the RCWMS Labyrinth. Please wear clean socks.

Free & open to the public.

Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

*April 8, 2014, Friday, 9:30 am–4:00 pm

WHEN GRANDMOTHERS SPEAK, THE EARTH WILL HEAL (from a Hopi saying)

Timberlake Farm, Whitsett, NC (near Greensboro)

Inspired by International Council of 13 Indigenous Grandmothers, this retreat explores ways to bridge the separation between humans and the natural world and ways to bring our grandchildren into love of the earth. Includes meditation, stories, earth prayers, and silent walks on wooded trails.

Leader: Carolyn Toben, founder, Center for Education, Imagination, and the Natural World at Timberlake Farm Earth Sanctuary; & Anita McLeod, Elder Women's Project.

Cost: \$80, includes lunch. \$25 deposit will hold a space.

Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

*April 13–18, 2014

ECUMENICAL HOLY WEEK LABYRINTH WALK

Binkley Baptist Church, Chapel Hill, NC

Sponsors: Several Chapel Hill churches

Free and open to the public. Please wear clean socks.

Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, rcwmsnc@aol.com

*Future WEEKS OF QUIET & WRITING FOR WOMEN:

May 4–11, 2014, September 21–28, 2014

Voice...

I followed a boyfriend to North Carolina. (I said I was going to pay more attention to women, I didn't say I was going to throw men over completely.) After a year of odd jobs, I applied to grad schools—law schools, graduate programs in mathematics, and divinity schools. I chose Duke Divinity School, because I didn't want to move and because I wanted someone to talk with me about God and why there were starving children in India. I was Presbyterian and the school was mostly United Methodist, but that didn't really matter to me.

A group of female Duke Divinity students had hosted an inter-seminary women's conference at Duke in the spring of 1974 and subsequently decided they needed a women's center. Thanks to a small grant from a Presbyterian women's program, some cooperation on the part of the school's administration, and an offer by Jill Raitt, the only woman on the divinity faculty, to give up her centrally located office and move to a quieter one, the students got their center. I entered Duke Divinity School in the fall of 1974, the same semester the Women's Center opened its doors. That's where I really began to find my voice.

While I found the faculty to be a brilliant bunch, they seemed to know almost nothing about the history of women or the practice of ministry on the part of women. I set about to help them learn. I raised my hand in class after class and asked, "What about the women?" After a pause and sometimes a blank stare, a professor would either stammer a bit, say there weren't any, or suggest I find them and report back. The new research on women was coming out in nearly every academic field of study, and while there was no Internet, there were books that could help, both new and old. The information about Martin Luther's clever wife, Katharina von Bora, for instance, was not hidden. My church history professor had just never been particularly interested in it.

When the first student director of the Divinity Women's Center left for the summer of 1975, I stepped in to cover the work. When she decided not to return to Duke, I continued for the academic year. During my time in seminary, we women encountered a range of problems from sexist language to a general resistance to women in ministry to sexual harassment. We began to address some of these problems by creating courses such as Women in Ministry and Women in Pastoral Counseling.

After three years of seminary, I had a theological education, some experience challenging the status quo, and very little idea of what to do next. The best advice came from the wise and wonderful Helen Crotwell, then the Assistant Minister to Duke University. "Why don't you do something no one else is going to do?" was Helen's answer to my puzzling about my future. Though she didn't know what that might be, she set me on a course of inventing something new.

The summer after graduating from seminary, I visited a few women friends who were serving as pastors in churches around the Southeast and asked them what they needed. They said they needed someone to care that they were there, to provide some resources, and to get them together with other women in ministry.

I thought I could do that. (In hindsight, it's just as well that I really had no idea what I was doing.) So, I

(Continued on back.)

Herstory

by Jeanette Stokes

At the preaching festival in October, I used three examples of U.S. women who raised their voices: Ann Hutchinson, the Grimké sisters, and Pauli Murray.

Ann Hutchinson, a mother, midwife, and spiritual teacher in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the 1630s, was arrested, convicted, and banished for troubling the church by teaching that God was a loving God. The Puritan fathers taught that God was a wrathful sovereign, one to be feared, a vengeful judge who decided ahead of time who was saved and who was damned. When Hutchinson's theories were declared to be in error, she was run out of Massachusetts into the wilderness of Rhode Island and New York where she and many of her children perished. Church Fathers in Boston interpreted her demise as proof of God's revenge against her sins.

The Grimké sisters, Sarah and Angelina, were born to a wealthy slaveholding family in South Carolina. Angelina was born in 1805 and grew up in the kind of pampered life that was usually reserved for European royalty. Over time, she began to be concerned about the evils of slavery. By the 1830s, she was convinced that slavery was a sin. She moved to Philadelphia, joined the growing abolitionist movement, and began to speak publicly. Angelina's sister Sarah studied law in her father's library before following her sister in Philadelphia.

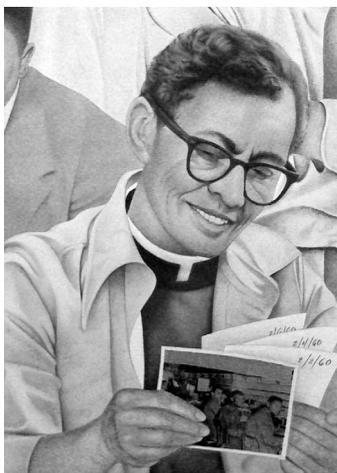
In her passionate presentations, Angelina would declare of slavery, "I have seen it." Eventually she not only advocated for emancipation but also insisted on racial equality. Still, it wasn't her topics that bought Angelina the most criticism as a public speaker; it was her breaking the taboo against women speaking in public. That led her to speak up for women's equality in remarks such as these:

"men and women were created equal.... Whatever is right for a man to do, is right for woman.... I seek no favors for my sex. I surrender not our claim to equality. All I ask of our brethren is, that they will take their feet from off our necks and permit us to stand upright on that ground which God destined us to occupy."

The public outcry eventually drove the sisters from the stage but not from their commitment to abolition and women's rights. Late in life, Sarah attempted to vote.

Pauli Murray struggled to overcome what she called Jane Crow, the double burden of being black and female. Born in Baltimore and raised in Durham, Murray became a tireless advocate for workers' rights, civil rights, and women's rights. This remarkable woman was a lawyer, a writer, a poet, a university professor, and eventually the first African American woman to be ordained as an Episcopal priest. In 2012, she was made an Episcopal saint.

Never one to let any injustice go unnoticed, she complained to A. Phillip Randolph in August 1963 that she had "been increasingly perturbed over the blatant disparity between the major role which Negro women have played and are playing in the crucial grass-roots levels of our struggle and the minor role of leadership they have been assigned in the national policy-making decisions." As a result, a few women were given seats at the back of the speakers' platform at the March on Washington.



Pauli Murray in *Service*
UNC School of Government
mural by Colin Quashie

Voice...

found a lawyer and created a nonprofit organization. I thought the name should reflect the intent of the organization, so we gave it an impossibly long name: The Resource Center for Women and Ministry in the South. That was thirty-six years ago.

Though by then I had noticed that I had a voice and was using it, my writing voice developed later, while working on the RCWMS newsletters. *South of the Garden* was originally intended to provide information about events that focused on women, religion, ministry, and social justice. The problem was what to do with all that extra white space. So I started writing about events we offered, feminist books that were being published, the Equal Rights Amendment, and the plight of farmworkers. Over time I stopped merely reporting and began to speak with a more personal voice, to describe some of my own life as it was unfolding, and to reflect on the world around me. That's pretty much what I'm still doing, and I intend to keep on.

There is a plaque on my desk that says, "Discipline is remembering what you want." In order to keep a voice alive to teach, write, speak, or preach, in order to keep a woman alive to do ministry, run a nonprofit, or just about anything else, it's important to feed her spirit. I regularly nurture my spirit, my creativity, and my faith so I can keep going. Discipline is remembering to do that.

Books, etc.

As the holidays approach remember our books and DVDs make wonderful gifts. You can find them at www.rcwms.org under "Publications."

Flying Over Home, new memoir by Jeanette Stokes
Good Busy, by Julia Scatliff O'Grady
35 Years on the Path, essays by Jeanette Stokes
Meinrad Craighead: Praying with Images, DVD about an amazing visionary artist
Blackbirds, Bottle caps, and Broken Records, DVD about environmental artist Bryant Holsenbeck

This fall included the debut of the RCWMS blog about books and other media. This project is still taking shape. So far we have brief reviews of spiritual autobiographies by Sarah Miles, Nadia Bolz-Weber, and Elif Shafak, and a blurb about the Australian film *The Sapphires*, with more to come. You can check it out at wordsandspirit.tumblr.com. We will also post alerts about new posts to our website.



Essay Contest

RCWMS is committed to supporting women as they find their voices and make them heard. Our 2014 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 this year should focus on the theme of inter-generational relationships among women. If you are a young woman, how have you been influenced by older women? What relationships and situations have helped you grow and enriched your life? Likewise, for older women, how have you been influenced by young women? How do intergenerational relationships and communities benefit women of all ages?

Prizes will be \$300 for first place, \$200 for second place, and \$100 for third place. The winning essay will be published in the RCWMS newsletter, *South of the Garden*, in March 2014. Winners will be notified by mail.

The limit is two essays per person. Submit four double-spaced copies of each essay. Previous first-place 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, 2014. Mail submissions: RCWMS Essay Contest, 1202 Watts St., Durham, NC 27701.

RCWMS

RCWMS is a thirty-six-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. To make a financial contribution or to volunteer, contact RCWMS or visit www.rcwms.org. We are especially grateful for support from the Kalliopeia Foundation and from Emerald Isle Realty.

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