

South of the Garden

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

Volume 39, Number 4

December 2018

Winter

by Rebecca Welper

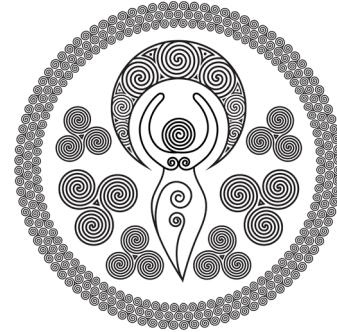
If you're having a hard time getting out to exercise during these bleaker months, try finding yourself a two-year-old to be your personal trainer. Mine is relentless. She gets me outside for interval training even in the nastiest weather. She loves barking instructions to Mama. "On your mark, get set, go!" I dutifully commence my laps. Her current go-to routine is for me to run around our picnic table while she runs in circles next to me. After several laps, I dash to her and bleat, "I'm gonna get you, I'm gonna get you!" while I grab her up with tickles. That's the best part. During the brief respite from running I get a couple reps in with a very wiggly and giggly set of weights. But like any good coach, she soon yells, "One more time!" (And it's never just one more time.) Back around the picnic table I go. By the end, I've worked up quite a sweat. I've let go of some of my cares. And she has hopefully gotten worn out enough for nap time.

Running in circles seems like a good metaphor for my life right now. There's work, preschool, playing, housework, cooking, eating, sleeping, and doing it all again tomorrow. Then there's the Earth, circling around the sun and titling away as far as it possibly can, just when I could use a little sunshine and warmth. It's enough to make me dizzy. But when I can pause to catch my breath, I realize I'm never quite following the same path twice. Maybe I'm going in a spiral instead of an endless loop. I love that you can find spirals everywhere in nature, from snail shells to hurricanes, and that people have been etching spirals since our species learned to draw. I'm comforted by the spiral's association with mother goddesses and the life-death-rebirth cycle. So, as I circle around to places that look familiar on the spiraling path, I can feel less like I'm treading the exact same footsteps and instead notice slight differences and appreciate some wisdom I've gained along the way.

It helps to be on this journey with others. I always look forward to the Interfaith Celebration, this year on December 16. We'll sing, celebrate, and reflect on the year, the darkness, and our hopes for the future. On December 18, Georgann Eubanks will be reading from her new book, *The Month of Their Ripening*, telling stories of twelve traditional North Carolina foods.

In the new year, you might attend a workshop on art, spirit, and rest with Claudia Fulshaw in January or one on storytelling with Judith Valerie in February. Catch Bryant Holsenbeck reading from *The Last Straw*, at Durham Library's Southwest Branch on February 10. Stretch your artistic imagination with Sue Sneddon's art workshop in February.

Finding ways to connect with nature and each other helps me with the notion that I'm on a meaningful path. As we journey on, may this season bring each of us unexpected insights, renewal, and peace.



Plastic

by Jeanette Stokes

Environmental artist Bryant Holsenbeck makes art out of stuff other people throw away. She does this, in part, to demonstrate how much trash we produce. Over the years, she has made jewelry out of broken records, books out of cast-off paper, room-sized mandalas of bottle caps, birds from old credit cards, and animals out of strips of worn-out clothes. All things that most people would throw away.

A few years ago, Bryant got curious about where "away" was and discovered that there is no away. Realizing that what we discard never really goes away, she became concerned about all the disposable plastic that piles up in landfills and clogs our streams.

She was so concerned about all this trash, that she decided to do an experiment. On the first day of January, 2010, she announced that for the whole year, she would attempt to use as little single-use plastic as she could. She knew it would be challenging to avoid disposable plastic, because it is everywhere: from drinking straws to coffee lids, from shampoo bottles to shopping bags. It is hard to go to the store without bringing more of it home. But Bryant was determined to give it a try and to blog about what she learned along the way.

Her experiment was a success. By that I mean she found many alternatives to single-use plastic and was able to share her discoveries. She quickly began carrying her own reusable bags, a steel water bottle, and silverware. Later she made her own granola, found shampoo in bar form, bought cheese at the farmers' market that was not wrapped in plastic.

RCWMS has been enthusiastic about Bryant's art and her work on behalf of the environment for some time now. We produced a delightful 15-minute film about her in 2009, *Blackbirds, Bottlecaps, and Broken Records*. You can order the DVD from us for \$15.

More recently, we thought that Bryant's work should be available in a book, so RCWMS encouraged her to write one. It turned out that much of what she wanted to say was in the blog about her year without plastic. So, we helped her turn the blog into a book. This fall RCWMS published *The Last Straw: A Continuing Quest for Life without Disposable Plastic*.

We are thrilled with the way the book turned out. Marcy Litle and I edited the manuscript. The book was designed by the talented Bonnie Campbell, and I have to tell you: it is gorgeous. If you haven't seen it yet, just visit our website and click on publications. For \$25, you can buy one for yourself or as a gift for a friend. You will also find the book at Regulator Bookshop, Zola's, and the Coop Market in Durham.

To find out more about Bryant and her imaginative work, go to www.bryantholsenbeck.com. To buy the book, go to: <https://rcwms.org/publications/>

Calendar

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

*December 16, 2018, Sunday, 7:00 pm

INTERFAITH CELEBRATION

Durham Friends Meeting, Durham, NC

We gather to reflect on the fading of the light and the promise of its return, on community and connections, on loss and love. All spiritual paths and religious traditions are welcome. Please join us to celebrate with song, readings, dance, and ritual designed to include and connect us all. Bring a candle.

Suggested donation: \$5–10.

Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, events@rcwms.org

*December 18, 2018, 7:00–8:30 pm

READING: *The Month of Their Ripening*, by Georgann Eubanks

RCWMS Office, 1202 Watts St., Durham, NC

Telling the stories of twelve North Carolina heritage foods, each matched to the month of its peak readiness for eating, Georgann Eubanks takes readers on a flavorful journey across the state. She begins in January with the most ephemeral of southern ingredients—snow—to witness Tar Heels making snow cream. In March, she takes a midnight canoe ride on the Trent River in search of shad, a bony fish with a savory history. In November, she visits a Chatham County sawmill where the possums are always first into the persimmon trees.

Free and open to the public.

Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, events@rcwms.org

January 11–13, 2019, 6:30 pm Friday–11:00 am Sunday

A WINTRY MIX: Art, Spirit, Rest

Avila Retreat Center, 711 Mason Rd., Durham, NC

Art, Spirit & Rest—three things we really don't get enough of. Welcome 2019 by giving yourself an entire weekend to consciously immerse in all three. Through fun, hands-on, multi-media art projects, Claudia reminds us how the arts afford us insights into our spirits and can influence our lives. No art experience is required for this guided and exploratory retreat. Leader: Claudia Fulshaw leads creative retreats via Art Wanders and operates her graphic design studio in Durham. A visual artist and longtime wanderer, she is passionate about connecting people to their creative spirit while making art.

Cost: \$280 includes bed, meals, and supplies.

Contact: claudia@artwanders.com, 919-306-2919

January 26, 2018, Saturday, 9:00 am–4:00 pm

A WINTRY MIX: Art, Spirit, Rest—A Mini-Retreat

The Stable, Durham, NC

See January 11 description of workshop.

Leader: Claudia Fulshaw

Cost: \$125 includes lunch and all art materials.

Contact: claudia@artwanders.com, 919-306-2919

January 26–February 2, 2019

INTERPLAY GUATEMALA ADVENTURE

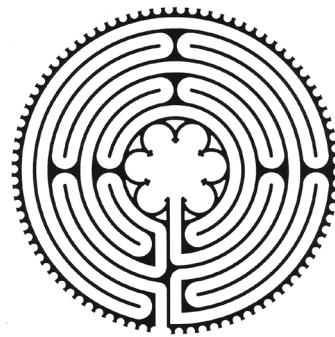
Villa Sumaya, Lake Atitlan, Guatemala

A seven-day InterPlay adventure in the Guatemala highlands. Rejuvenate your body, mind, heart and spirit in the shadow of three majestic volcanoes.

Leaders: Kate and Billy Amoss, Ginny Going, Tom Henderson, InterPlay teachers

Cost: \$1,500; \$400 deposit. Send deposit to Colleagues, 400 S. Boylan Ave., Raleigh, NC 27603

Contact: Ginny.colleagues.interplay@gmail.com



*February 9, 2019, Saturday, 9:30 am–12:00 pm
WOMEN'S WISDOM—TELLING TALES OF THE HEART: Storytelling Workshop for Women of All Ages

Pullen Memorial Baptist Church, Raleigh, NC

Do you have stories to tell? Sharing our stories can deepen our understanding of ourselves and each other. As we craft and tell our stories with other women, we find our own authentic voices and increase our internal authority, dignity, and personal power. In this intergenerational workshop, you will learn simple steps to craft your stories, whether they be joyful, sad, happy, angry, or silly; listen and be heard in an affirming space; build connection and community with other women. Designed for women who want to develop and tell their own unique stories. Leader: Judith Valerie is a storyteller and story-circle creator, yoga teacher, and workshop facilitator, who is also a certified InterPlay leader.

Register: \$35 suggested donation. Scholarships available. (Just ask.) Open to all people who identify as female. www.judithvalerieyoga.com/workshops.html
Contact: Judith Valerie, jv@judithvalerieyoga.com

*February 10, 2019, 3:00 pm

READING: *The Last Straw* by Bryant Holsenbeck
Southwest Branch, Durham Library, Durham, NC
Environmental artist Bryant Holsenbeck had long wondered where trash goes when we throw it "away." Realizing that what we discard never really goes away, she became concerned about all the disposable plastic that piles up in landfills and clogs our streams. Bryant began saying NO to single-use plastic, and she spent a year discovering ways to live without it. *The Last Straw: A Continuing Quest for Life Without Disposable Plastic* documents her journey and the creative alternatives she found.

Free and open to the public.

Contact: jelevine@dconc.gov

*February 15–17, 2019, Friday 2 pm–Sunday 2 pm

FINDING YOUR MEDIUM: A Weekend of Art 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? Join Sue Sneddon 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 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 & food, \$375. (Some meals included.) Housing is \$125 double, \$225 single.

Register: rcwms.org/events/

Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, events@rcwms.org

*February 22–25, 2019, Friday 7 pm–Monday 10 am
MAKING YOUR ART: An Advanced Workshop with Sue Sneddon at Emerald Isle, NC

For those who've taken Sue's "Finding Your Medium."

Leader: Sue Sneddon (See February 23–25.)

Cost: Workshop & some meals, \$400, plus housing in beautiful beach house, \$125 double or \$225 single.

Register: rcwms.org/events/

Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, events@rcwms.org

(Continued on back.)

Keep on!

by Jeanette Stokes

I was pretty happy the morning after the November 6 elections this year. RCWMS had helped to register voters and get them to the polls. Anita Earls won a seat on the NC Supreme Court. Two of the six NC constitutional amendments on the ballot had been defeated. The right-wing supermajorities in the NC House and Senate had been broken, and enough Democrats were elected to the US House to restore some balance in Washington.

But the guy in the White House didn't wait twenty-four hours after the election before he lobbed his next flash bomb at us. That's how his unexpected assaults on democracy feel to me--like flash bombs. He fired Attorney General Jeff Session and installed one of his cronies, probably to thwart an ongoing investigation.

I was not fan of Sessions. I thought it ludicrous to put a man with such a racist history in charge of defending the laws of the land. But at least he had the sense to recuse himself from oversight of the Mueller investigation into charges of Russian meddling in American campaigns, because he might be implicated. That left investigation oversight in the hands of Rod Rosenstein, who had appointed Mueller in the first place. Sessions' recusal allowed the investigation to proceed unimpeded. Trump made it clear he wanted the investigation to stop. He fired FBI director James Comey, because Comey wasn't loyal enough.

Somehow, Trump and his crew decided he could get away with firing the attorney general and installing Matthew Whitaker, a man he hoped would stop the investigation. To this lay person, this all looks like obstruction of justice, like a president trying to interfere with an investigation of which he might be a target. For many of us, the question is whether Trump or his campaign were in cahoots with the Russian interference in our election.

The firing set in motion an emergency plan that had been in place for months. The good folks with Indivisible had a "rapid response plan" in place in case anything happened to endanger the Mueller investigation. Thousands of people had signed up ahead of time to get information about how to respond quickly. So, the word went out to gather Thursday, November 8, at 5:00 pm local time in cities and towns across the country. Almost 200 people showed up in Durham, 750 in Raleigh, and scores of people at nearly ninety other locations. I went to the rally in Durham, which was a great gathering, but it felt so unfair that we had to be protesting again just two days after the election.

By Friday of election week, I was exhausted. Saturday morning, I could hardly get out of bed. It didn't make sense. Why wasn't I just happy about the election? Why did I feel like I had been run over? When I thought back over the events of the previous months, they seemed sufficient to wear out the sturdiest among us: the Kavanaugh confirmation, two hurricanes, the massacre at a Pittsburgh synagogue, the murders of Black people, ongoing violence against women, the midterm elections, and then KABAM! Trump fires the attorney general. (Oh, right, and my mother died.) Sexism, homophobia, and white supremacy were on the march again.. So, I decided to lie down for a few hours.



Mandala by Bryant Holsenbeck

When white supremacists start spewing hate speech and bullets, they mean to protect straight, white, Christian people and obliterate everyone else. Since "white" is an invented category, it morphs to suit those wielding the term, the hatred, and the violence. When white supremacists lash out against "the other," they may lump together everyone with ancestors who were Native American, African, Southern European, Middle Eastern, Asian, or anything outside the British Isles and Northern Europe. They promote "us" against "them" attitudes.

Any form of hating "the other" can turn to violence. When we have a President who spews and tweets hatred on a daily basis, eventually it gets aimed at nearly all of us, certainly all of us who are not straight white males, and sometimes his wrath extends to some of those guys as well.

Our task as faithful people is to figure out how to recognize our differences, honor them, and not turn one another into the enemy because of them. Trump uses difference to divide us and to breed fear. It is an old trick. Blame the "others." Suggest to white people that "if you are suffering, it is because of those people," because of immigrants, or people of color, or Jewish people, or LGBTQ people, or whomever.

Mass shootings in Charleston and Pittsburgh, police killings, mass incarceration, poor funding for Medicaid, and cuts in social services are all attempts to eliminate "those people." All of our religions preach against this, and all of our religions are used to support this hatred, prejudice, discrimination, and violence. The president and FOX news are now inverting and targeting new versions of "the other" 24/7.

After lying down for a few hours, I got up again. I began slowly. We'll keep reading and talking with one another. We'll keep protesting. In late November, Tuesdays with Tillis held their 100th protest at the senator's office in Raleigh. Thank you to all of you who keep reading, talking, voting, working for justice and equity. Thank you for helping us see more clearly

Essay Contest

RCWMS is committed to supporting women as they find their voices and make them heard. Our 2019 Essay Contest opened for submissions on December 1. Women eighteen years of age and older may submit previously unpublished nonfiction essays of 1400 words or less.

THEME: Essays should focus on Activism, Protest, Citizen Engagement, or Holy Anger. We hope that people will write about the ways that they participate in democracy and how they understand faith or spiritual practices as inspiring or supporting their activities in the public square.

DETAILS: Women 18 years of age or older may submit up to 2 nonfiction essays, 1,400 words or less. Submit online only: <https://rcwms.submittable.com/submit>. Previous first-place winners and current RCWMS Board members not eligible. No sermons, please. Do not put your name on your essay(s). Fill out the online cover letter form with the essay's title, your name, address, phone, and email. Submissions open November 1, 2018 and close January 15, 2019.

PRIZES: \$300 for first place, \$200 second, and \$100 third. The winning essay will be published in the RCWMS newsletter, *South of the Garden*, March 2019.

NOTIFICATION: Winners will be notified by email.

Support

RCWMS is a unique and special place--one of the few remaining organizations that works at the intersection of feminism and faith, contemplation and action, social justice and spirituality. Your support makes it possible. In addition to supporting programs on writing, art, preaching, grief, and elder women, your donations enabled us to offer several brand new programs this year. In these political times, simply caring for ourselves and each other can be revolutionary.

People often come to us feeling lost and run down. Your gifts give them a way to be part of something larger. Together we find the strength to be ourselves and speak with our own voices in a harsh world.

We're raising money to continue our transformative programs in the New Year and add new programs on the Enneagram and younger women's spirituality. Thank you for a gift of any size to help us reach our end-of-year goal of \$40,000. This work is truly a community effort, and you are the heart of this community.

If you have any questions about donations of cash, stocks, or anything else, be in touch with Rebecca Welper, rebecca@rcwms.org. To make a donation online, go to: rcwms.org/donate/. To send a check in the mail, use: RCWMS, 1202 Watts St., Durham, NC 27701. Thank you!

RCWMS

RCWMS is a forty-one-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 contribute, contact RCWMS or visit www.rcwms.org. We are grateful for support from Kalliopeia Foundation, E. Rhodes & Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, Vanguard Charitable, Inavale Foundation, Emerald Isle Realty, A-Squared Fund of Triangle Community Foundation, and Community Foundation of Western NC.



Calendar...

*March 15–16, 2019, Fri., 7–9 pm & Sat., 9:30 am–3:30 pm
A WRITING WORKSHOP with Carol Henderson
In a private home with a cat, Durham, NC
Leader: Carol Henderson is a writer, editor, workshop leader, and the author of *Losing Malcolm*, and *Farther Along: The Writing Journey of Thirteen Bereaved Mothers*, and editor of *Wide Open Spaces: Call Stories*. More: www.carolhenderson.com
Cost: \$125. Register: rcwms.org/events/
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, events@rcwms.org

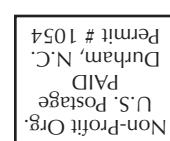
*March 23, 2018, 9:30 am–4:00 pm
WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH THE REST OF YOUR LIFE? A Retreat for Women in the Second Half of Life
In a private home with a cat, Durham, NC
Feminist Betty Friedan said, "Aging is not lost youth but a new stage of opportunity and strength." As we age, our priorities often change, we become more discerning, we seek ways we can be more authentically ourselves. Many of us ask: "Where can we be useful?" "What is our purpose?" "What does it mean to be wise?" "Who are we when we are not what we used to do?" Life is a constant process of refining who we are. This retreat will offer time to reflect on who and where we have been as women and the opportunities that open to us as we age. Come listen to your own heart and yearnings and to other wise women seeking authenticity and wholeness.
Leaders: Pat Boswell, a UCC minister, has worked in hospital chaplaincy, Hospice, and palliative care. Terry Moore-Painter, a retired hospital chaplain and UCC minister, used art and creativity in her work with oncology patients.
Cost: \$75, scholarship available. Please, bring a bag lunch. Snacks/dessert will be provided.
Register: rcwms.org/events/
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, events@rcwms.org

*Weeks of Quiet & Writing in 2019:
January 2–9, May 5–12, September 22–29

RC People

RCWMS Trustees: Barbara Anderson, Solita Denard, Jehanne Gheith, Cathy Hasty, Erin Lane, Márcia Rego, Rebecca Vidra, Molly Williams, and Karen Ziegler

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Bryant Holsenbeck, Artist in Residence



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