

South of the Garden

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

Volume 40, Number 2

June 2019

Pride

by Rebecca Welper

June is busting out all over! And that means one thing: Pride. In June of 2008, I went with my then partner to San Francisco Pride, in the brief window of time when marriage equality had come to California (only to be whisked away by Prop 8 that November). The booths and vendors covered a vast, festive, grassy area; people were lounging on blankets, dancing, and getting married left and right; there were fairy wings, leather, and rainbows. A multitude of rainbows. The parade was glorious.

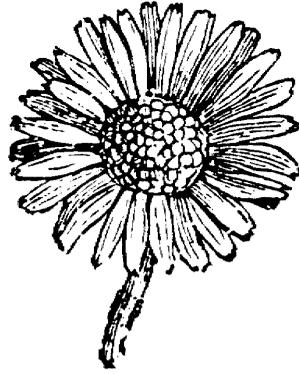
I was only a couple years into my bisexual journey, but being at that Pride felt exciting and historic for our people. That fall, when a majority of Californians voted that marriage had to be “between a man and a woman,” I took it as a personal blow, even though I lived clear across the country. It got worse when we saw my partner’s brother, a prominent Republican, complain on national television about “fascist” protesters, as in the gays and lesbians who had taken to the streets, mostly peacefully, when their rights were stripped away.

Family can be funny. I only learned in my late twenties, several years after coming out, about the whispers that my great-aunt had lived with a woman for thirty years. I wish my younger self had known about that during the years I was wrestling with my identity—alone, confused, ashamed, and scared. We need our stories. We need our history.

If you don’t know the full history of Pride and the beginnings of the modern LGBTQ rights movement, watch the PBS documentary *Stonewall Uprising*. Warning: it was very upsetting for me to watch the homophobic, fear-mongering PSAs from the period, to learn about Nazi-like medical experiments, and to see interviews with trans, bi, lesbian and gay folks about the myriad social and legal oppressions they faced. Because of the activism catalyzed by the six days of protesting at Stonewall fifty years ago, and the work continuing today, we have made tremendous progress. And yet.... It can feel hard to celebrate when my family members have been criminalized for going to the bathroom, just within the past three years. When transgender people are once again banned from the military, and LGBTQ folks can now be denied *any kind of medical care*, if the provider thinks that’s what their god wants. It doesn’t help that one of the last unsupportive mainline denominations, the United Methodists, dug in their heels this spring and once again voted against our rights.

Religious trauma can be the most gutting. A few months after coming out, I happened to attend a Sunday morning service at a nondenominational church with my sister. I realized part-way through that I would not be welcomed there as my authentic self. As I stood singing a hymn in the balcony of the huge auditorium, I suddenly felt exposed, like all eyes

(Continued on back.)



Responsible

by Jeanette Stokes

“Thank you for your contribution,” the woman said. “You’re a good person.” She had seen my name listed in the program as a supporter of a public event. Without thinking, I responded, “No, you are a good person. I just have a dead mother.” I wanted to take it back immediately. I know the rule. Just say, “My pleasure,” or “Thank you,” when someone is trying to be appreciative. Don’t argue with people when they are giving you a compliment.

Still, that is what I thought. My mother died a year ago, and I have inherited some stuff: some land in Texas and some money. I don’t have resources to share because I’m a good person, and sharing them doesn’t make me a good person, either. I have resources to share because my ancestors were white people who lived in a capitalist society and they were among the winners in that deadly game. They stole land from Native American people and labor from Black people, and, with the proceeds of their plunder, they accumulated property and money.

Despite my rash remark, I don’t mean to be flip about this dreadful part of our collective history. The more I read, the clearer it becomes that this theft of land and labor built the economy of the West. Not just the US, but Europe and Great Britain, as well. (If that doesn’t ring a bell, read *Empire of Cotton* by Sven Beckert or *The Half That’s Never Been Told* by Edward Baptist.)

My mother’s people moved west when families got too big to support everyone in the Old South. Overworked land in the East was beginning to give out, and land was “opening up” to white settlers further west. My ancestors went from North Carolina and South Carolina to Alabama, Arkansas, and Texas. They were able to occupy these areas after Andrew Jackson and others forced Native Americans to move (read: walk, starve, die along the way) from what would become Mississippi, Alabama, and Arkansas to places even further west. And in Texas, land became available when the Texas Rangers murdered or drove out Native Americans. They were so thorough that it is hard to find Native American people in Texas today. But evidence of their presence survived. According to a family story, there were still Native American structures along the creek in Files Valley (south of Ft. Worth) when my grandmother’s grandfather settled there in the 1840s.

Unlike my father’s people who stayed in Georgia during and after the Civil War, my mother’s people who had gone to Texas did not face financial ruin. And later, during the Great Depression, they managed to keep much of their wealth by owning land.

That Texas family was large and the land has been divided many times over the years. Even so, a piece of bottom land in Files Valley has now come to me, acres of rich black land, built up over hundreds of thousands of years by the flooding of tiny little File Valley Creek. It

(Continued inside.)

Calendar

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

June 1, 2019

LAMA ROD OWENS

Hayti Heritage Center, Durham, NC

2:00–5:00 pm, Buddhist Christian Dialogue

7:00 pm, free public lecture

More info: www.triangleinsight.org/lamarod/

June 2, 2019, Sunday, 9:30 am–5:00 pm

LAMA ROD OWENS: POC and LGBTQ Retreat

Duke Integrative Medicine, Erwin Road, Durham, NC

Conversations and contemplations on the stuff we're scared to talk about. Race, gender, sexuality, identity rooted in Buddhist Wisdom and human experience.

Cost: \$100, scholarships available. Donations accepted for Lama Rod.

More info: www.triangleinsight.org/lamarod/

*June 21-22, 2019, Fri. 7:00-9:00 pm & Sat. 10:00-4:00 pm

TO TASTE LIFE TWICE: Building the Personal Essay

Trinity Ave. Presbyterian Church, Durham, NC

Come spend the weekend in a supportive and structured personal essay writing workshop. This class is perfect for those who can't commit to a 6 or 8-week class but would like to re-commit to their writing practice. Using prompts and reading from other well-known essayists, we will learn to build and refine our own personal essays. This workshop will give each writer the opportunity to create new work, collaborate and experiment in a supportive environment and connect with a local writing community. This is a nonfiction workshop but it is open to writers of all genres. Limit: 10 students. Please bring a journal and your favorite writing utensil and be prepared to write in class.

Leader: Allison Kirkland earned her MFA in Creative Nonfiction from The New School and teaches creative writing to adults in non-traditional spaces all over the triangle. Learn more at allisonkirkland.com.

Cost: \$140. Register: www.rcwms.org/events/

Contact: RCWMS, events@rcwms.org

*July 11, 18, 25, Aug 1, 2019, Thursdays, 7:00–9:00 pm

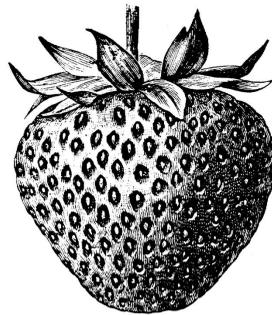
HOLISTIC ENNEAGRAM SERIES: A Spirituality of Head, Heart, and Body

Did you know that you have more than one brain—that your heart and your gut both have their own intrinsic nervous systems? They have neurons that can take on information, store it, change, and adapt. Your head, heart, and gut are the components of your human mind, and the Enneagram can help you better listen to all of them. Join other women and nonbinary folks under 40 for this four-week class that will cover: Triads and Resource Points; Ego Defense Mechanisms and Body-based Character Structure; Instinctual Subtypes: Self-Preservation, Sexual, Social; Deepening Spiritual Awareness. No need to have attended the Teaser course in March to attend the series, though a working knowledge of the Enneagram and your type will be useful. (This series is part of RCWMS' program to support younger folks' spirituality, and registration for this event is limited to those under 40.)

Leader: The Rev. Adrienne Koch is the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina's Young Adult Missioner and Campus Minister for the Raleigh Area and a spiritual formation leader at Duke Divinity School.

Cost: \$75. Register: www.rcwms.org/events/

Contact: meghan@rcwms.org



*July 13, 2019, Saturday, 9:30 am-4:30 pm

ART DAY BY THE RIVER HAW

A beautiful studio apartment in Saxapahaw, NC

Let's go with the flow! Bring your favorite art supplies to capture the beauty of the Haw River. Sue will demonstrate some techniques and offer one-on-one assistance to help you reach your desired effects. Some pastel and watercolor supplies will be available.

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.

Sponsors: RCWMS and mahaloArts

Cost: \$125. (Bring your own lunch or yummy options will be available for purchase.)

Register & more info.: Alison Weiner of mahaloArts, www.mahaloArts.com/sayhey/

*July 14, 2019, Sunday, 2:00-4:00 pm

THE MINISTRY OF BLACK WOMEN'S SELF-CARE

RCWMS Office, 1202 Watts St, Durham, NC

Self-care is often the component that remains a form of intervention (after the break or the medical emergency) rather than a preventative measure.

When we allow our bodies, minds and/or spirits to break down in the course of doing this work, we are not only putting ourselves at risk but we are putting at risk the integrity of the work for which we are laboring. This work is a work of self-love, communal love, Womanist Ethicism, it is multi-generational, multicultural and is not finite, but is instead as infinite as the beauty in the divinity that is Blackness. Come and share in this life's work! This program is specifically designed to offer practical tools for everyday self-care to Black women-identified individuals doing all forms of ministry, in church and community.

Leader: Kimberly Gaubault (McCrae) is an intentional lover of humanity and actively lives the self-care life about which she teaches and advocates. Her personal philosophy of interpersonal interaction is, "If I've not positively influenced someone everywhere I've gone, I've not walked in my purpose."

Cost: \$10-40, sliding scale. Scholarships available!

Contact: events@rcwms.org, www.rcwms.org/events/

July 17–21, 2019

THE LEAP! Living in Excellence, Abundance, and Productivity

Villa Dora Mae, Jamaica

If designing a life that centers your well-being is something that interests you, gather with us on the beautiful island of Jamaica. Living in excellence, abundance, and productivity is possible. This experience is designed to usher women into the fullness of the life they deserve. Tapping into our inner strengths, gifts, and talents, we will begin to redefine our individual freedom and represent our greatness in the world! Let's walk together into our dreams, desires and passions...let's LEAP together!

Leader: Kimberly Gaubault (McCrae) (See July 14)

Contact: theleap2019@gmail.com.

July 29–August 1, 2019

THE 37th WILDACRES INTERFAITH INSTITUTE

Wildacres, Little Switzerland, NC

Theme: *Journeying Through: Caring Presence in Times of Illness and Pain*. Each religious tradition responds to illness in its own language of prayer, ritual, story, and custom. Explore Muslim, Christian, and Jewish traditions about the sacred work of caring for one

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Enneagram

by Meghan Florian

Holistic Enneagram: A Spirituality of Head, Heart, and Body

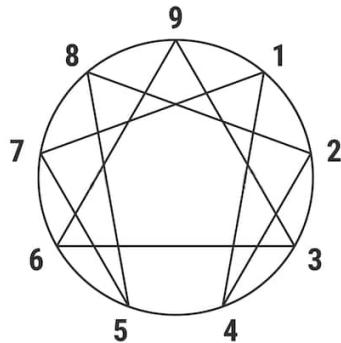
In March, Adrienne Koch led an Enneagram workshop as part of our younger women's spirituality program. A group of people under 40 gathered at the RCWMS office to learn about this system of nine personality types. As we went around the circle introducing ourselves and sharing our types, or what we suspected our types might be, Adrienne noted that it's rare to have a five like me show up for a program like this, much less plan it. When I joked that, after five years of reading about the Enneagram, I was finally ready to talk about it with other people, little did I know how true that need to enter into conversation would prove throughout the evening.

After learning about the Enneagram through a friend and taking an online quiz, I sought to deepen my knowledge by reading Helen Palmer's book, *The Enneagram: Understanding Yourself and the Others in Your Life*. While the quiz had left me unsure as to my type, reading Palmer's descriptions made my five-ness crystal clear. I learned more about myself through reading and noticing how Palmer's descriptions rang true in my daily life and how I relate with others, but my understanding of the other types was lacking. Reading about fives, I had firsthand knowledge. Reading about the other types, I had only a description, lists of characteristics, an idea of a person rather than actual people. In coming together for this introductory workshop, as Adrienne presented an overview of each type and invited each of us to share about our particular type, the pieces started to fit together. Listening to and talking with a group of people, some of whom were new to me and some of whom I've known for a long time, the Enneagram came to life and helped me see how the self-understanding I had begun through exploring my own type could deepen and strengthen my relationships.

Even in the short time since the workshop, I've had multiple occasions to see how being a five affects my interactions in meetings, in relationships, in day to day activities. I can remember, too, times when I have shifted toward seven under stress, and toward eight in times of growth, and I can imagine what life might be like, what I might have to offer, if I loosened my grip on my basic fears and fixations. I've sometimes encountered folks who brush off vehicles for self-knowledge such as the Enneagram as navel gazing, completely missing the fact that a lack of self-reflection affects not only one's self, but how one shows up for others. A lack of self-reflection can be destructive to personal relationships as well as broader communities, and in that sense the work of understanding oneself is a gift a person gives to those they care about. Learning about the Enneagram in community with others is a form of experiential learning that for a five like me feels both challenging and necessary, a place of vulnerability and growth. In addition, in contrast to other personality typing systems I've learned about, the Enneagram taps into spirituality, bringing together head, heart, and body, as creatures in relationship not just with one another, but with the divine.

The workshop just scratched the surface, providing an overview to set participants up for an in-depth

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Responsible...

is a flat patch of land just a few hundred yards from the spot by the creek where my grandmother's grandfather saw structures left by the Native Americans who had been killed or driven out so that white people like my ancestors could move in.

Though I've known all my life that I would probably inherit a piece of this fabled family land, it feels really different now that the county records say it belongs to me. What is my responsibility to the people who lived on that land just before my white ancestors arrived? Who were they and where did they go? And what about the people my ancestors enslaved? Does it matter that it was only a few people? Does that make it any better? Whether it was one or a hundred, they were part of one of the most widespread, thoroughgoing, and shameful systems of race-based human bondage in the history of the world. No, white North Americans were not the only enslavers on the planet, but some of them studied slavery, murdered enslaved people, and fought a war to protect what can only be described as evil.

So, here I sit with the sins of my ancestors (long and not so long ago) upon me. What is my responsibility? As best I can work it out, my responsibility is to learn as much as I can about the history, share the resources that have come to me, and try to figure out what reparations (personal, local, and national) might look like.

I think of it this way. If I learned that my grandfather had stolen a deed to some land from your grandfather and that my family had profited from that theft, wouldn't it seem to you that I owed you something? What if that land now sits under an elementary school, and I don't even own it anymore? Still, I might live in a better house, drive a newer car, and my kids might go to a more expensive college than your kids. Not because of my hard work, but because of something an ancestor did. We owe something to the people our ancestors have wronged. And it's hard to figure out what that might be when people in this country are still carrying on as though each generation makes or breaks themselves.

Resources that can help us think about racial justice and reparations include Ta-Nehisi Coates' article "The Case for Reparations" (*The Atlantic*, June 2014). Also, Sandy Darity and Kirsten Mullen have done extensive work on this issue. They point to the signs of generations of racism and inequity—frequent police murders of African American, mass incarceration, and economic disparity. Start with this discussion (www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHbTh4xm_x0) or this article, "Baby Bonds: A Leg Up for Everyone" at dukesanford.atavist.com/the-big-idea-baby-bonds.

Enneagram...

workshop Adrienne will be leading for RCWMS on Thursday evenings in July. Many of the participants in this overview workshop expressed excitement about going deeper in July. New folks who missed the overview workshop will be welcome to join us in July, as well! As for me, I won't be able to resist reading more between now and then, even as I look forward to gathering again to continue this journey in community, with friends old and new.

Meghan Florian is the RCWMS Communications Director.

Pride...

were on me. I felt like I was floating out of my body a little bit. It didn't compute that had I attended a few months prior, I would have been fully accepted. I was the same person. Nothing had changed. I felt like I'd been punched. It takes a lot of work to live in a world that doesn't want you to exist.

I wish we didn't still need Pride. I wish those in our community who are most marginalized—because of their poverty, skin color, gender identity, immigration status, religion—were not facing threats on a daily basis, far graver than what I experience. What can we do?

One partial answer is to gently care for each other's uncertainty. Some of us did that at the Holistic Enneagram workshop in March led by Adrienne Koch (read Meghan Florian's write up in this issue). Not only did I find it affirming to attend a workshop led by an out and proud queer minister, I loved recognizing aspects of myself and loved ones in the descriptions of the types, all amidst a sweet community of other seekers. I keep learning—and forgetting—and learning again that self-love and acceptance, or Pride, is the best gift I can give myself. I'm looking forward to the deeper exploration of the Enneagram over four evenings this summer.

Several other programs this summer are also geared toward greater self-acceptance, self-care, and self-expression, including To Taste Life Twice: Building the Personal Essay with Allison Kirkland; The Ministry of Black Women's Self-Care with Kimberly Gaubault (McCrae); and Art Day by the River Haw with Sue Sneddon.

We need our stories. We need our truths. We need our Pride.

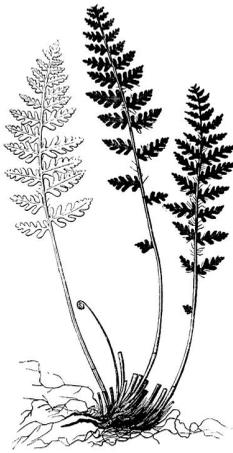
Rebecca Welper is the RCMWS Development Director.

Support

Be on the lookout for our summer fundraising campaign starting later in June! Your support has helped us add new programs and publish artist-in-residence Bryant Holsenbeck's wildly successful book, *The Last Straw*. This summer we're raising \$4,500 to support folks at the intersection of feminism and faith, contemplation and action, social justice and spirituality. Your support makes it possible!

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Calendar...

another in times of illness and pain.

Leaders: Rabbi Steven Sager, Imam Mowlid Ali, Rev. Katie Crowe, Kathleen Maloney-Tarr, & Bishop Ronald L. Godbee

Cost: \$325 clergy & spouse, \$350 laity

Info: gcarwildacres.com/, gcarwildacres@gmail.com
Sponsored by Greater Carolinas Association of Rabbis

*August 20, 2019, Tuesday, 7:00 pm

READING by KATEY ZEH

1202 Watts St., Durham, NC

Katey Zeh will read from her new book, *Women Rise Up: Sacred Stories of Resistance for Today's Revolution*. Free

*October 3-4, 2019, Thursday-Friday

HOMEGROWN: NC Women's Preaching Festival

Trinity Avenue Presbyterian Church, Durham, NC

Details TBA. Info: <https://ncwomenpreaching.com/>

*Weeks of Quiet & Writing:

Sept. 22-29, 2019, January 2-9, 2020, May 3-10, 2020

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 especially grateful for support from E. Rhodes & Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, Mike McLeod, Emerald Isle Realty, Inavale Foundation, Triangle Community Foundation, and Community Foundation of Western NC.

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