

# South of the Garden

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

Volume 41, Number 1

March 2020

## Spring

by Rebecca Welper

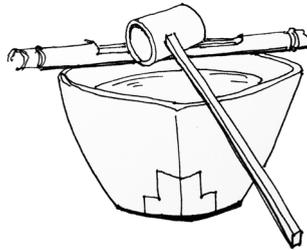
Sometimes anxiety takes hold of me in the spring. I'm hesitant to leave the forgiving hibernation time of winter. Buds and bees buzz happily to life, but all I can think is, WHAT IF I CAN'T GET IT ALL DONE? I notice all the worrisome things around me, from dirty laundry to the threat of nuclear war: my mind short circuits and concludes I can't do anything about any of it. Better to hide in the kitchen and eat Girl Scout cookies. (No, not the gluten-free kind, they ran out. I'll have to sacrifice.) I close my eyes for a soft yet crunchy, gooey, bite. The caramel, coconut, and chocolate melt on my tongue. Ah, Caramel deLites, the same tasty treat as 30 years ago when I sold cookies. I pause to wonder whether my mother, a life-long Girl Scout and anti-sugar crusader, is rolling over in her grave or smiling down on this sweet ritual. Either way, I'm starting to feel better. Not only is the sneaky sweetness lifting my spirits, I'm feeling like a very good citizen for supporting the Girl Scouts. I suppose there's a thin line between eating our feelings and helping the next generation of young women save us from this collapsing world.

Now in better spirits, I can choose some other small actions to ease me into spring, without springboarding me into anxious paralysis. My four-year-old is very interested in plants, so we decide to start some seedlings indoors. We pat miniscule lavender seeds into Dixie cups filled with moist, dark potting soil, and place them next to a window in the sunroom. Every day we squirt the soil with our spray bottle. Despite my worries creeping in—what if the seeds are all duds, and there's not enough sunlight, and we forget to water, and she knocks over all the cups—the little lavender seeds indeed germinate and begin sprouting their way up toward the sunlight. My four-year-old is thrilled.

But I drift back toward anxiety. I'm sure that only beings unaware of our current Trumpian disaster, of the climate crisis, of the unending violence and cruelty of our world, would have the temerity to spring to life, so full of hope. Those poor, innocent lavender seedlings.

But what if a little innocence is a good thing? What if taking moments to recapture childlike wonder (whether through cookies or seedlings) helps ease the burden of anxiety, opening a more heart-filled path forward? What if we do this together and begin healing our collective, societal anxiety?

That's what RCWMS is here for. You might try walking the RCWMS labyrinth March 3 at Duke Chapel, and during Holy Week (April 5–10) at Binkley Baptist Church. On March 21, Georjean Blanton will lead *Enneagram 101: Know Your Number*. We're also excited about *Coming Home to Yourself: Life Beyond Fight or Flight*, offered by Jane Austin in April. May hope continue to spring forth.



## Water Bowl

by Jeanette Stokes

I host a Valentine's sale at my office most years. Lily, a middle-schooler who lives across the street from the office, likes to attend with her dad, Tom. Lily was busy eating snacks or admiring Galia and BJ's cards while her dad looked through my photograph cards. He pulled one out with a picture of a pottery bowl about the size of a salad bowl, turned to me, and said, "That's my bowl."

"Oh?" I wondered what he meant. I love that bowl; it's the one we use for hand washing at Japanese tea gatherings at Duke Gardens. Evidently, some years ago, Tom's wife loaned the bowl to Nancy Hamilton who started the tea gatherings. Then Tom's wife died, Nancy moved to California, and Tom assumed the lovely bowl with square-ish corners had moved away.

"No," I said. "We use it every time I attend a tea ceremony. It is now in Chizuko's care. Do you want it back?" No, he said he'd just like the current tea leader to know that it was his bowl.

"I always assumed the bowl was Japanese," I said, thinking of the many authentic Japanese implements used at the tea gatherings. I was glad to discover the origin of the bowl. Since I knew Tom and his wife had lived in Japan for some time, I assumed they acquired the bowl when they lived there. They had certainly acquired a deep appreciation of Japanese design, evident in the garden outside their house.

"No," said Tom. "It's from Virginia."

"What?" That seemed odd. I looked at Tom quizzically. He asked, "Have you ever been on the pottery tour near Floyd called *16 Hands*? I had not, but my friend Catherine who lives in Blacksburg had taken me to several of the potters' studios, where I had purchased some pieces, and Catherine had given me others as gifts.

"Was it made by someone like Donna Polseno?" I asked. "No, by a guy who used to be on the tour," said Tom. "David Crane?" I asked. "Yes, that's his name," he said, and I started to laugh.

I have several David Crane mugs at home and one bowl with squared-off corners that is very similar to the water bowl, but smaller. That smaller bowl has been sitting on my breakfast table for weeks holding a series of camellia blossoms from my front yard.

Still, I was surprised that I had never noticed the similarity in the bowls. Since I assumed that the water bowl was Japanese, I never made the connection. Watch out for your assumptions. They get in the way of seeing what is right in front of you.

I love these connections. The larger bowl will now remind me of my dear friend in Virginia and of the David Crane pieces I have enjoyed for years.

# Calendar

\* = RCWMS events. To register and for more information: [rcwms.org/events](http://rcwms.org/events).

\*March 3, 2020, Tuesday, 8:00 am–8:00 pm  
LABYRINTH WALK  
Duke Chapel, Durham, NC  
Walk the RCWMS Labyrinth. Please wear clean socks. Allow about half an hour for your walk.  
Free & open to the public.  
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, [info@rcwms.org](mailto:info@rcwms.org)

\*March 13-14, 2020, Fri. 7–9 pm, Sat. 9:30 am–3:30 pm  
WRITING WORKSHOP with CAROL HENDERSON  
Be prepared to write a lot and to leave with deeper insight, fresh perspective and plenty of material for further inquiry and writing. For women only.  
Leader: Carol Henderson is a writer, editor, workshop leader, and author.  
More: [www.carolhenderson.com](http://www.carolhenderson.com)  
Register: \$125, [rcwms.org/events](http://rcwms.org/events). Bring a bag lunch.  
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, [info@rcwms.org](mailto:info@rcwms.org)

March 20, 2020, 6:00 pm Friday to 4:00 pm Saturday  
FINDING FREEDOM: White Women Taking on Our Own White Supremacy  
Saxapahaw, NC  
Explore what we can and must do individually and collectively to resist racism and undo our own internalized white supremacy. This workshop will use the tools of embodiment to bring our full selves--our bodies, minds and spirits--to the task of creating a new collective identity for ourselves as racial justice workers.  
Leaders: Evangeline Weiss and Kari Points  
Cost: Sliding Scale  
Contact: [Evangeline Weiss](mailto:evangelineweiss@gmail.com), [evangelineweiss@gmail.com](mailto:evangelineweiss@gmail.com)

\*March 21, 2020, Saturday, 9:00 am–4:00 pm  
ENNEAGRAM 101: Knowing Your Number  
Trinity Ave. Presby., 927 W. Trinity Ave., Durham, NC  
This workshop will introduce the Enneagram, an ancient tool for understanding differences, supporting spiritual growth, and promoting compassion. It is for those who want to discover their number, are still unsure of their number, are looking to hear more about their stress and security numbers, or for those who want a review or simply to gather for a day with those who want to learn more about the Enneagram. The workshop includes an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the types, as well as the interpersonal challenges of each number.  
Leader: Georjean Blanton, a United Methodist minister, offers spiritual direction and Enneagram coaching in Dallas and Austin.  
Cost: \$60 (if \$60 is a burden, you may pay less)  
Register: [rcwms.org/events](http://rcwms.org/events)  
Info: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, [info@rcwms.org](mailto:info@rcwms.org)

March 27, 2020, Friday, 7:30 pm  
HOLLY NEAR in Concert  
Community Church, 106 Purefoy Road, Chapel Hill, NC  
Holly Near has been singing for an equitable world for over 40 creative years. An insightful storyteller, she is rooted in contemporary activism. With Tammi Brown, Jan Martinelli, bass, and Tory Trujillo. Also a short opening by Evangeline Weiss and Kari Points about white supremacy.  
Cost: \$30  
Tickets: [www.brownpapertickets.com/event/4477659](http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/4477659)

\*March 28, 2020, Saturday, 11:00 am–1:00 pm  
I GOT NEXT!, Self-Care Vision Boarding Party



RCMWS Office, 1202 Watts St., Durham, NC  
Heading into 2020 with a clear vision and plan for self-care can make a healthier you your new normal. Join us as we discuss what accessible self-care can look like and plan for a healthier normal in 2020! Bring your friends and discuss/design a squad care normal for you and your village.  
Leader: Kimberly Gaubault (McCrae) is an intentional lover of humanity and actively lives the self-care life about which she teaches and advocates.  
Cost: \$15. Register: [rcwms.org/events](http://rcwms.org/events)  
Info: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, [info@rcwms.org](mailto:info@rcwms.org)

\*April 5–10, 2020  
ECUMENICAL HOLY WEEK LABYRINTH WALK  
Binkley Baptist, 1712 Willow Dr., Chapel Hill, NC  
Walk a replica of the labyrinth found at Chartres Cathedral. Prayer stations on the perimeter provide resources for those who walk.  
Free and open to the public. Please wear clean socks.  
Sponsors: Several Chapel Hill churches  
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, [events@rcwms.org](mailto:events@rcwms.org)

April 15–19, 2020, Wed., 3:00 pm to Sun., 2:00 pm  
OUR ESSENTIAL THREAD: Mindfulness Retreat with Therese Fitzgerald  
Well Being Retreat Center, Tazewell, TN  
Supported by early spring beauty, Buddhist teachings of bodhicitta (mind of awakening), co-practitioners, silence, and solitude, we will have a great opportunity to reinvigorate ourselves and invite insights.  
Leader: Therese Fitzgerald is a Dharma teacher and a hospice chaplain on the island of Maui  
Cost: \$335-650, (lodging& meals) plus dana  
Info. & register: [wellbeingretreatcenter.org/events](http://wellbeingretreatcenter.org/events)

April 18, 2020, Saturday, 9:00 am–4:00 pm  
SPRING MIX: ART, SPIRIT, NATURE, REST, & THE ELEMENT AIR  
The Stable, Durham, NC  
Come ready to feel your spirit lift and your busy mind relax as we breathe in the goodness that spring's colors, textures, sights, scents and sounds create while making art. No previous art experience necessary.  
Leader: Claudia Fulshaw lives in Durham and is a graphic designer, artist, long-time wanderer.  
Cost: \$150 (includes lunch, and materials)  
Info: 919-306-2919 or [claudia@artwanders.com](mailto:claudia@artwanders.com)

\*April 25, 2020, Saturday, 2:00–4:00 pm  
COMING HOME TO YOURSELF: Life Beyond Fight or Flight  
Trinity Ave. Presby., 927 W. Trinity Ave., Durham, NC  
Do you want to feel more connected? More energetic? "More in the flow?" Are you calm and peaceful even when those around you are not? The somatic experiencing process helps clients build resiliency, not by telling the story, which often retraumatizes, but by touching into the trauma without going into overwhelm. In this workshop you will learn tools and information about your nervous system to grow your capacity by touching into your sensations, feelings, thoughts, and perceptions without becoming activated. As with most things, the way out is the way through. This workshop is about how to take the way through.  
Leader: Jane Austin is a coach, spiritual director, and somatic experiencing practitioner (SEP).  
Cost: Dana (payment is what you choose to give)  
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, [events@rcwms.org](mailto:events@rcwms.org) or Jane Austin, [jaustinsd@msn.com](mailto:jaustinsd@msn.com)  
Register: [rcwms.org/events](http://rcwms.org/events)

(Continued on back.)

# Be Here

by Liddy Grantland

Though the weather is chilling and the leaves are falling, my mind has been traveling back to a different change in the seasons. Spring of this year brought with it two moments that would change my life, though I didn't know yet that they would. My doctor told me that pain would be a part of my life for as long as I live, and I applied for an internship at the Resource Center for Women and Ministry in the South.

Coming to terms with a lifetime of hurting means that it often feels like it's no longer just pain that limits me, but also the mountainous emotions that have arrived along with it. And one of the places that I have so often sought peace—church—has also begun to feel too small for my emotional and physical suffering. Almost every space I occupy rewards the moments that I pass as able-bodied, pretending as if neither my body nor my spirit are hurting.

Almost.

This semester, at the intersection of my labor and my faith, where self-blame, shame and stigma so often live, sat instead a little house on Watts Street. This house is the home of the Resource Center for Women and Ministry in the South.

Jeanette Stokes, an author, minister, artist, activist and all-around incredible human, noticed a need among women—especially those in the Southern United States—whose lives were infused with both the joys and sorrows of a flawed religion and a flawed world. She sought to create a space to make art and music, to preach and teach, to come together and be seen, heard and loved. Over forty years later, I sent in an application, not knowing that it would be exactly what I needed.

I have worked for four different nonprofits in the past year, each of which I love dearly. But I could tell that something was different about the Resource Center within minutes of arriving for my interview in the cozy, sunlit room full of books, art and the debris of decades of advocacy and activism. I sat down on a comfy couch, and Jeanette asked two questions, back to back. "Is that seat comfortable? And how's your pain today?"

I knew the answers to both of those questions, but I was still taken aback. Jeanette and I had done a phone interview where I told her about my chronic pain, but I wasn't expecting her to bring it up again. Why was she asking me about pain when we had work to do? It turns out that letting one another see both the shiny and the less-shiny parts of our lives is exactly the work that the Resource Center does. Everyone whose lives are touched by RCWMS—the staff, the interns, the bank tellers, the postal carriers, the neighbors—are regarded as complex, limited, beautiful, whole persons worthy of love and attention.

That means that when it's raining outside, we might work from home and stay in our pajamas. It means that I never once logged my hours, that Jeanette trusted my friend and fellow intern and I to do what we said we would do. It means that sometimes we would drop what we were doing and take a walk around the block. It means that more than once I would find myself sitting in a circle, the youngest one in the room,



surrounded by wise women. It means that snacks and tea and stretch breaks and hugs are not just encouraged, but required. It means that the Resource Center has decided that it's going to do both work and faith differently, and it's inviting anyone who wants to join to come on in.

If this sounds countercultural, it's because it is. It took me weeks to become accustomed to walking into the Resource Center and turning off the part of my brain that demanded my body and mind ignore their pain. I have lived for so long in a world that positively reinforces the moments where I appear to be in less pain than I am; it is strange and fascinating to be in a place that positively reinforces just showing up and being myself.

A few weeks into the semester, I left the Resource Center after stuffing envelopes and chatting all afternoon, and the poem by Mary Oliver popped into my head: "You do not have to be good. / You do not have to walk on your knees / for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting. / You only have to let the soft animal of your body / love what it loves." Being in pain does not make me bad. And it is not my fault that I am in pain. But the peculiar way that capitalism, white heteropatriarchy and hegemonic religion have intersected in this moment has done a good job of convincing me that both lies are true. A faithful body that hasn't experienced healing is disruptive to a simplified faith that shrinks God's love down to bodies that are able and well. And a smart mind that hasn't been able to think its way out of being in pain is disruptive in an institution and workforce where one's worth is predicated on their intellectual productivity.

My body disrupts a faith and a labor system that declares that our bodies are good only insofar as our bodies are productive and able. And I am so scared of appearing weak or stupid or broken in the spaces I occupy that I use my work and my faith to repent for being in pain, as if my pain was my fault, as if it makes me anything other than good and worthy of love. The Resource Center said to me this semester, you do not have to be good, because you already are. You do not have to repent, because you haven't done anything wrong. You only have to let the soft animal of your body love what it loves. You only have to show up. My time at the Resource Center is ending as the semester ends, and I already know I will miss it deeply. The world we all live in lives inside each of us, calling our bodies bad when they hurt or look different or feel too much. That voice is loud, harsh and strong.

But this semester, in the middle of all that racket, another, gentler, sweeter voice has appeared in my mind. I hope you learn how to let it appear in your mind, too.

It says, you do not have to be good. You just have to be here. It is enough for you to be here.

*Liddy Grantland is a Duke University, Trinity College senior. Her column, "feel your feelings," runs in the Duke Chronicle.*

NOTE: This column was first published in the *Duke Chronicle* as "You don't have to be good." You can find the original piece: [www.dukechronicle.com/article/2019/12/you-do-not-have-to-be-good-chronic-pain-disability-student-life](http://www.dukechronicle.com/article/2019/12/you-do-not-have-to-be-good-chronic-pain-disability-student-life).

# Calendar...

\*April 30, 2020, Thursday, 7:00 pm

READING: *Tara: The Liberating Power of the Female Buddha* by Rachael Wooten

Pullen Memo. Baptist, 1801 Hillsborough St., Raleigh  
In *Tara: The Liberating Power of the Female Buddha*, 22 Meditations to Heal Ourselves and Repair Our World Wooten says, "Tara connects you to the archetypal Divine Feminine, an energetic force that exists within us and all around us." While there are many scholarly books on Tara, this practical, psychological guide shows how those of any tradition can directly access her, through clear instruction and authentic Tibetan Buddhist teachings. Free and open to the public.  
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, info@rcwms.org

May 15-16, 2020, 9:00 am-5:00 pm

WRAPPING WILD: Making Animals Out of Recycled Materials

Pocosin Arts Gallery, 201 Main St, Columbia, NC  
Leader: Bryant Holsenbeck is an environmental artist.  
Cost: \$218. Info: pocosinarts.org/2020-workshops/

May 16, 2020, Saturday, 5:00-7:00 pm

SUE SNEDDON Opening Reception  
Craven Allen Gallery, Broad St., Durham, NC

July 13-16, 2020, Monday-Thursday  
YOUNG WOMEN CLERGY CONFERENCE  
Minneapolis, MN  
Info: youngclergywomen.org

September 8-12, 2020

FINDING YOUR MEDIUM: Painting with Sue Sneddon  
Pocosin Arts Gallery, 201 Main St, Columbia, NC  
Leader: Sue Sneddon, a much loved NC artist.  
Cost: \$545. Info: pocosinarts.org/2020-workshops/

September 20-26, 2020

WRAPPING WILD: Making Animals Out of Recycled Materials  
John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, NC  
Leader: Bryant Holsenbeck is an environmental artist.  
Cost: \$630. Info: www.folkschool.org

\*October 15-16, 2020, Thursday-Friday

HOMEGROWN: NC Women's Preaching Festival  
Trinity Avenue Presbyterian Church, Durham, NC  
Info: www.ncwomenpreaching.com

Future Weeks of Quiet & Writing:

May 3-10, 2020 (Sunday-Sunday)  
May 10-17, 2020 (Sunday-Sunday)  
September 20-27, 2020 (Sunday-Sunday)  
January 2-9, 2021 (Saturday-Saturday)

# RCWMS

Many **THANKS** for your year-end gifts to RCWMS. Your donations helped us meet our goal, enabling this transformational community to grow and thrive. We can't thank you enough for sustaining womanists and feminists in their pursuit of healing, connection, art, and justice. We're especially grateful for those of you who are giving recurring monthly donations. This year, we hope a few more of you will join this lovely group. You can start with as little as \$10 a month.

We are thrilled to have **RACHEL SAULS** as our Anita McLeod Intern this semester. She is a senior at UNC-Chapel Hill, where she is majoring in English and Comparative Literature with a double minor in Jewish Studies and Hispanic Studies. While interning at the Resource Center, her project will be focused on women's intergenerational friendships. Rachel says she is grateful for the opportunity to learn and grow in the RCWMS community, and we are so happy to have her help.

**SUE SNEDDON** has begun her term as RCWMS artist in residence. A much loved artist, Sue has been painting the NC coast for forty years. She led *Finding Your Medium* and *Making Your Art* for us at Emerald Isle in February. Mark your calendar to attend the opening of her next exhibition at Craven Allen in Durham on May 16, 5:00-7:00 pm. Watch the calendar for other workshops she will be leading this year.



RCWMS is a forty-two-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](http://www.rcwms.org). We are especially grateful for support from E. Rhodes & Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, Mike McLeod, Emerald Isle Realty, Inavale Foundation, and the Triangle Community Foundation.

RCWMS Trustees: Tanya Best, Merle Boyd, Jehanne Gheith, Cathy Hasty, Christine Houghton, Márcia Rego, Marion Thullbery, and Molly Williams

Staff: Jeanette Stokes, Executive Director; Rebecca Welper, Development Director & Special Projects; Marya McNeish, Programs & Publications; Sue Sneddon, Artist in Residence; and Rachel Sauls, Intern



Drawings by Sue Sneddon



SUBSCRIPTIONS to South of the Garden cost \$20 and run for 12 months from the time placed. Foreign or First Class is \$25. A subscription is free to anyone for whom the subscription fee is a burden. Tax-deductible contributions over and above the subscription fee are appreciated. Please, send a check to our office at: RCWMS, 1202 Watts Street, Durham, NC 27701, or go to [www.rcwms.org](http://www.rcwms.org).

YOUR MAILING LABEL shows the year and month your subscription will expire. 2109 = 2021 September.

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