

# South of the Garden

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

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## Spring Time

by Rebecca Welper

When you're a new parent, they tell you: the days are long, but the years are short. That must be how Pandemic Time works as well. That's how it's felt to me this past year, anyway, although my "baby" will be heading to kindergarten in the fall. (Fingers crossed!) Every day seems to drag on, but when we get to five o'clock, I wonder, where did the day go? What did I even do today?

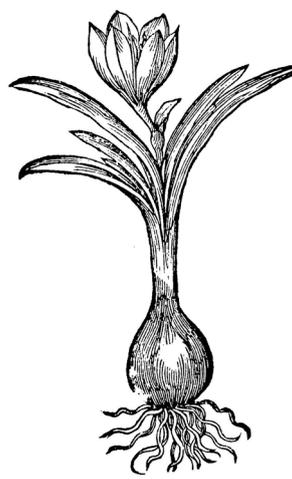
(Usually: eat a great breakfast made by the morning person in the house (hubby) and then spend the rest of the day inexpertly, yet sometimes with good humor, trying to balance paid work and housework with kiddo's physical/social/emotional/intellectual needs (and wants) and my sanity.)

On the other hand, I can't believe we've been at this for a year. I can't believe we've witnessed and nurtured the growth of our kiddo through her entire 4-year-old year, during which, instead of experiencing school or friends, she spent a huge amount of time in nature and read literally hundreds of books, while also learning about racial injustice, the importance of voting, and what unhappy "Trumpsters" will do when feeling aggrieved. I can't believe it's been a year since I've eaten at a restaurant, been to the movies, and seen my family in Ohio. I can't believe I lost my 96-year-old grandmother to COVID complications in the same week in January that my other grandmother turned 100.

After such a long haul, it seems almost surreal that people are getting vaccinated and that the end of the pandemic could be on the horizon. We may be experiencing a gradual societal opening up in time to mirror the opening buds of spring. After all this time in my three-person pod, will time suddenly feel squeezed with the reintroduction of in-person school and work, trips to museums and the pool, and visits with friends? Or will time feel more abundant because of the energy sparked by moments of deep connection and meaningful activities in the world?

In part, I must be obsessing about time because I'm turning forty this spring. I know, forty is a milestone in many of our readers' rearview mirrors, and I know age is just a number. But I'm still surprised to find myself at this threshold. Fully, unambiguously, middle aged. I know there's power and wisdom here, but I don't feel ready.

We don't know when it will be safe to meet in person at RCWMS, but we know that day will surely come. Until then, we'll continue to Zoom. We hope those who are not quite forty will join us for Exploring the Enneagram with Chelsea Yarborough. Former RCWMS trustee Solita Denard will lead Reclaiming Sustainable Life Rhythms to Support Health (for all ages). If anything, during this time we can tune into different rhythms than before the pandemic. We can aim to be intentional about our relationship to time when moving into the next phase of life.



## Relief

by Jeanette Stokes

In late December 2020, I started saying, "Hang on. The light is coming back, the inauguration will happen, and vaccinations are coming." I felt hopeful and a little lighter. Then the January 6 attack on the Capitol happened and I went back to feeling anxious and unsettled. After that, I said, "Hang on. The light really is coming back, the inauguration will probably happen, and vaccinations are starting to happen." It had been ten months since the pandemic had changed daily life and I still felt uncertain about the coming days.

In late January 2020, I attended a Robert Burns birthday party thrown by some neighbors who enjoy celebrating the Scottish poet. At that gathering I stood nose to nose with a woman who had just returned from her job at the Duke campus in Kunshan, China. She was home for the Chinese New Year holiday and reported she had just received notice that she should not count on returning to China for a few weeks. I also learned that many professors at Kunshan came from Wuhan, the suspected center of the pandemic.

On March 2, my colleague Marcy Litle left Seattle where she had been visiting her grandchildren and COVID-19 had begun to spread. She left feeling as though she was fleeing a tidal wave. At that point, it was becoming clear that in North Carolina we were going to need to take serious measures to protect ourselves. I like the way artist Carrie Weems says it: Mask up, back up, and wash up. I took the instructions seriously. My last in-person meeting was with Ethel Radmer on March 11. I took a lovely spring walk in Duke Gardens on March 13, only to discover that evening that the gardens would be closed to the public "for a while."

I am one of the truly lucky ones. I can work from home (or totally alone in our office), stop going to the grocery store (opting for curbside pickup instead), and only see people (except for my spouse) outdoors wearing masks and staying far apart.

Due to poor national leadership and less than optimal behavior by individuals, the pandemic spread rampantly across this country, disproportionately in Black and brown communities. Some 30 million people in the US are known to have contracted the virus and more than 500,000 have died. Stories of people falling ill crept into my circle of friends: a brother-in-law got sick, relatives who went to a funeral got COVID and died, an elder in a nursing home tested positive.

Then in January, my 90-year-old father-in-law got sick. At first the doctor thought it was his usual winter respiratory infection, but then he tested positive for COVID. In the process of figuring it out, my husband was exposed and went into quarantine. Since I had not been exposed, I decided to move into our office. And there I stayed for two weeks, with a comfortable mattress on the floor, heat, water, and a minimal but usable kitchen. After I settled in, I decided to consider it a retreat.

(Continued on back.)

# Calendar

\* = RCWMS events. More info: [rcwms.org/events](http://rcwms.org/events).

\*March 14, 2021, Sunday, 2:00–4:00 pm EDT  
FABRIC POSTCARDS: Workshop with Kimberley Cartwright (via Zoom)  
Participants will create unique fabric or paper postcards for mailing, gifting, or displaying. Patterns and directions included.  
Leader: Kimberley Pierce Cartwright, quilter and artist  
Cost: \$50. Sliding scale available.  
Register: [www.rcwms.org/events](http://www.rcwms.org/events)

\*March 16, 2021, Tuesday, 7:30–8:30 pm EDT (Zoom)  
THE MINISTRY OF BLACK WOMEN'S SELF-CARE: A Series with Kim Gaubault  
Self-care is too often an intervention after a crisis rather than a preventative measure. If we allow our bodies, minds, and spirits to break down in the course of doing our work, we not only put ourselves at risk, we risk the integrity of our work. This series will offer practical tools for everyday self-care to Black women-identified individuals doing all forms of ministry, in church and community. (3rd Tuesdays this Spring.)  
March 16: *Remember of Our Multi-Generational Excellence*  
April 20: *Finding Agreement in Our Differences*  
May 18: *Tell Me Something Good! Celebrate Small Victories*  
Leader: Kimberly Gaubault (McCrae) is an intentional lover of humanity and actively lives the self-care life.  
Sponsors: RCWMS and the Pauli Murray Center for History and Social Justice. Cost: \$10-40 per session.  
Register: [www.rcwms.org/events](http://www.rcwms.org/events)

March 16–April 27, 2021, Tuesdays, 3:00–5:00 pm EDT  
RESPONDING TO THE CALL: Supporting White Anti-Racist Faith Leadership (via Zoom)  
Leaders: Chris Crass and Evangeline Weiss  
Register: [www.eventbrite.com/e/respond-to-the-call-supporting-white-antiracist-faithspiritual-leadership-tickets-137427341879](http://www.eventbrite.com/e/respond-to-the-call-supporting-white-antiracist-faithspiritual-leadership-tickets-137427341879)

\*March 21, 2021, Sunday, 1:00–3:00 pm EDT  
RECLAIMING SUSTAINABLE LIFE RHYTHMS TO SUPPORT HEALTH (via Zoom)  
Join us on the second day of Spring as we consider what is needed to live fully in this moment by operating in our personal wisdom each day. In this introduction to Integrative Health Coaching, participants will create a foundation to begin each day with intention and attention to personal health. All participants will receive information about how to continue exploring 9 areas of health to support their lives. What do you need to reclaim? Let's find out together!  
Leader: Solita A. Denard, MSW, IHC partners with clients as they create and activate a vision for better personal health. She believes that supporting clients in the process of behavior change is sacred work.  
More about Solita: [www.healthintegration629.com](http://www.healthintegration629.com)  
Cost: \$25. Register: [www.rcwms.org/events](http://www.rcwms.org/events)

March 31–April 28, 2021, 5:30–8:00 pm EDT  
FINDING FREEDOM: White Women\* Taking on Our Own White Supremacy (via Zoom)  
Workshop explores how white women\* contribute to white supremacy and can work to end racism.  
\*For all women and gender-nonconforming, nonbinary and trans people, and all white and mixed-race folks.  
Cost: \$50–300 for 5-part series (based on ability to pay).  
Register: <https://wearefindingfreedom.org/>

April 8–10, 2021 (virtual event)  
THE HINGES UPON WHICH THE FUTURE SWINGS: Womanism As a Gateway to Our Future(s)  
Conference will gather the nation's premier womanist scholars, practitioners, activists, and leaders.  
Sponsor: Katie Geneva Cannon Center for Womanist Leadership, Union Theo. Seminary, Richmond, VA  
Cost: \$160-210. Register: [aap.events/KGCCWL](http://aap.events/KGCCWL)



April 10, 17, May 1, 8, 2021, 10 am–3 pm EDT (via Zoom)  
WHITE PEOPLE WORKING for RACIAL JUSTICE  
Participants will do the deep work required to claim and embody an anti-racist identity, understand the privilege they carry, and interrupt racism where they live.  
Leaders: Autumn Campbell & Lois McCullen Parr  
Cost: \$395, scholarships available  
Register: [www.justiceleaderscollaborative.com/](http://www.justiceleaderscollaborative.com/)

\*April 11, 2021, Sunday, 1:00–3:00 pm EDT  
EXPLORING THE ENNEAGRAM: A Workshop for Women Under Forty with Chelsea Yarborough (Zoom)  
Learn how we use the Enneagram as a tool for spiritual growth and continued connection with others. Using various exercises, our Enneagram number, and triggers, we'll explore next steps for continued growth! Designed for participants under 40 to explore where we've been, where we are, and where we hope to go.  
Leader: Chelsea Yarborough, MDiv, is a doctoral candidate in Homiletics and Liturgics at Vanderbilt, an ordained minister, a poet, and an Enneagram enthusiast.  
Cost: \$25. Register: [www.rcwms.org/events](http://www.rcwms.org/events)

\*April 14–28 2021, Wednesdays, 1:00–3:00 pm EDT  
ANGELS AND ANIMALS: Creatures of All Kinds with Bryant Holsenbeck (via Zoom)  
This 3-session workshop is about making art out of the stuff of our everyday lives. Nothing bought, nothing ordered—only what you can find! Bryant is “curious about what we will find and then what we will be inspired to make. The techniques I have to teach are simple. Twisting, tying, wrapping, and more!”  
Leader: Environmental and textile artist Bryant Holsenbeck has been creating beautiful art out of stuff for decades. More: [bryanholsenbeck.com](http://bryanholsenbeck.com) or follow her on Instagram at @Bryant-Holsenbeck.  
Cost: \$75 (includes all three sessions)  
Register: [www.rcwms.org/events](http://www.rcwms.org/events)

\*June 3, 2021, 6:30–7:30 pm EDT  
PAULI MURRAY BOOKCLUB  
Join the discussion of *Ferguson & Faith*, by Leah Gunning Francis. The conversation will be facilitated by Aleta Payne and Barbara Lau.  
Free. Register: [bit.ly/PMCJUNBOOK](http://bit.ly/PMCJUNBOOK)

\*June 9, 2021, Wednesday, 10:00 am–12:30 pm EDT  
THE GIFTS & CHALLENGES OF THE ENNEAGRAM TYPES IN RELATIONSHIPS—with Sandra Smith (Zoom)  
Leader: Sandra Smith, MDiv, is a certified Enneagram teacher. More: [www.alchemyworksevents.com](http://www.alchemyworksevents.com)  
Cost: \$35. Register: [www.rcwms.org/events](http://www.rcwms.org/events)

\*2nd Tuesday, monthly 11:30 am–1:30 pm EST (Zoom)  
ART OF CONSCIOUS AGING: A Group for Women  
Info: [www.rcwms.org/events](http://www.rcwms.org/events) (March 9 is the next one.)

Tuesdays, weekly, 7:00 pm–8:00 pm EDT  
MUSIC: takeOut jazz with mahaloJazz!  
Join Alison Weiner for jazz every Tuesday evening.  
Attend: [www.facebook.com/mahaloArts/videos](http://www.facebook.com/mahaloArts/videos)

3rd Thursday, monthly, 7:00 pm EDT  
TARA PRACTICE with Rachael Wooten (via Zoom)  
Leader: Rachael Wooten, PhD, Jungian analyst, writer, Tibetan Buddhist dharma teacher, and author of *Tara: The Liberating Power of the Female Buddha*,  
Cost: Free. Rachael: [rachaelwootenauthor.com](http://rachaelwootenauthor.com)  
More: [www.bhumisparsha.org/events/](http://www.bhumisparsha.org/events/)

Day or overnight, Ongoing  
SOLO WANDERINGS! Creative Retreats  
The Stable, private retreat in Durham, NC  
Self-guided retreats for up to 4 people.  
Leader: Claudia Fulshaw, graphic designer and artist  
Cost: \$100 solo/\$65 additional person; plus overnight  
Contact: [artwanders.com](http://artwanders.com), [claudia@artwanders.com](mailto:claudia@artwanders.com)

\*RCMWS Weeks of Quiet & Writing:  
May 9–16, Sept. 19–26, 2021, & January 2-9, 2022

# Illusions

Note: RCWMS was pleased to publish *Illusions of Innocence* by Marcy Litle in the fall of 2020. Marcy lives in Durham, NC, and taught Latin American history and international studies at Duke University until her retirement in 2012. The following excerpt is from her book, which can be ordered at: [rcwms.org/publications](http://rcwms.org/publications).

## INTRODUCTION: "The Racial Imaginary"

*White people in America tend to suffer an anxiety . . . they know that they are white, but they must not know what they know.* —Claudia Rankine, *The Racial Imaginary*

I am trying to understand and own up to my whiteness. To stop wearing blinders. To untie this habitually unseen knot.

This task requires attention to the voices of those I, without thinking, considered other. It takes breathing deep into the possibility that reality is other than I have imagined. My life different from the one I thought I was living.

Poet Claudia Rankine urges us to “inhabit, as intensely as possible, the moment in which the imagination’s sympathy encounters its limit. To see what that shows you you have not yet seen.”

Imagination is not a special realm outside of our constructed history and being. Not a free space. Not postracial or postpolitical.

We must search deep inside our presumed whiteness. Trace its roots. Dig it out.

Only then might we discover who we are. Only then might we find our place in the work. In the world.

## HOW DID I GET TO BE A WHITE PERSON?

Maybe this project is all about that question. The more I explore, the more complicated it seems. When my mother fell into hysterics over an incident with our Black housekeeper Maggie, I was jolted into noticing her difference, her Blackness. I learned to associate it with potential threat, with fear. But I probably didn’t think of us, of myself, as white back then. I probably thought of myself as normal.

I imagine that all children start out that way, assuming that the way things are and the way people look in their family is the baseline of being. And then as we grow up, things happen that teach us about human variability, and we begin to absorb lessons about what those perceived differences mean. James Baldwin, in the film *I Am Not Your Negro*, recounts a memory of playing cowboys and Indians as a child. He consistently chooses to play the role of cowboy, until the world teaches him that he is really an Indian.

Children come of age within families, communities, institutions, polities. Which, in America, means absorbing the story of national identity. That is one of the roles of school, to create citizens who share a common story about identity and purpose. At least, that’s sometimes what the creators of school think that they are doing. But for most of our country’s history, that story has been framed in such a way as

(Continued next column.)



Photo by MJ Sharp  
cover of *Illusions of Innocence*

to normalize, even sanctify, the behaviors, beliefs, and interests of a small group of propertied white men as if the world they created included, or had the capacity to include, all of us. Even as the story erased the humanity of most of the country’s inhabitants. Even though for many of those white men, their property, often their most valuable property monetarily and otherwise, was made up of humans.

The founders of this country were propertied white men. They were the inheritors of those who came before, those who invented and solidified the sanctity of property, and, in the interest of preserving that property, created whiteness as a cover.

To be propertied, white, and male made you deserving; it was a sign of competence and worth. That is the story that I absorbed, even though I had no clue about its origins.

## RESPONSIBILITY

*The people who believe themselves to be white are obsessed with the politics of personal exoneration.*  
—Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*

My hometown, Durham, North Carolina, is demographically diverse, a city where Black and white intersect every day. And, until recently, I didn’t think much about race—my race, anyone’s race. I taught international studies at Duke University for twenty-five years, many of those years in a program that attracted undergraduate students from around the world. We talked daily about diversity, about cross-cultural communication, about oppression, injustice, and misunderstanding. We talked about race as a social and historical construct. One year we read Peggy McIntosh’s classic 1990 article, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” which provoked a lively and contentious conversation. And yet, I didn’t pay much attention to the way race permeated my own daily life, the air I breathed, the space I inhabited.

Then several years ago a small group of us, white women, decided to take up Ta-Nehisi Coates’ book club challenge and read Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow* together. I knew the history she described and was not particularly surprised by the story she unfolded. I knew about the entanglement of slavery and freedom at the birth of the Republic. I knew about debt peonage in the postbellum South. I knew and didn’t know, at the same time.

I am not much inclined to activism (though recent events have sternly challenged that), so my main response has been to try to stop averting my eyes, to pay attention. And there has been much to attend to—Ferguson, Baltimore, Cleveland, and Charleston, South Carolina, where I was born. Charlottesville.

After the shooting in Charleston, several Black writers suggested that the most useful thing white people can do to combat racism is talk to white people. So that is what I am trying to do. Starting with myself. I am trying to unearth the elements of my own racial formation in order to understand how they have shaped my life, to gain some freedom, and perhaps to make things a tiny bit better. I am trying to take on and understand responsibility, to loosen my attachment to the desire for exoneration.

# Queer Clergy

by Rachel Sauls

I don't remember the first time I heard a woman preach, but I do remember the first time I sat in a sanctuary in which same-gender couples filled the pews around me.

I grew up with the knowledge that women could be ministers, and yet I was too nervous to ask if this included queer women. During my teenage years, I was pleased to discover that religious communities have the capacity to practice inclusivity and affirmation. And yet, I also found myself repeatedly discouraged upon discovering that marginalization and oppression have not been eradicated, even from communities that consider themselves affirming.

RCWMS began in 1977 to connect and support the growing number of women ministers in the South. Nearly forty-five years later, the inaugural cohort of Queer Clergywomen Thriving in the South is blossoming as an expansion of that initial objective. This virtual program aims to provide a nourishing space for religious leaders whose genders and sexualities have been marginalized in religious spaces, and who are weaving feminism, spirituality, and creativity together in innovative ways.

Planning for Queer Clergywomen began prior to COVID-19 hitting the US. The pandemic presented challenges to the in-person program we had envisioned. Thanks to Zoom, queer clergywomen from across the South—not just NC—are participating in the cohort.

The cohort of eight queer clergywomen from various religious backgrounds began meeting in February, and will continue to meet monthly through July. They are led by Dr. Shonda Jones, who is currently Senior Associate Dean for Strategic Initiatives and Assistant Teaching Professor in Intercultural Theological Education at Wake Forest University School of Divinity. Her wisdom, energy, and expertise are a gift to cohort participants as they navigate their vocations as queer religious leaders.

Over the course of the next few months, participants will continue to connect with one another, explore resources for self and community care together, and engage in sustaining practices to support them in their religious leadership. Stay tuned for further updates and insights from the Queer Clergywomen Thriving in the South cohort.

Note: Queer Clergywomen Thriving in the South is made possible by generous support from the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation.

## QUEER clergywomen THRIVING in the SOUTH

Graphic by Rachel Sauls

# Relief...

My father-in-law was sick for a couple of weeks but recovered. My husband tested negative, twice. And after working like I was trying to get tickets to a sold-out rock concert, I finally got appointments for our vaccinations in February.

The Duke Gardens are still closed. My neighbor who works in Kunshan is still in Durham. And I'm now wearing double masks. By the time you read this, I will have had my second vaccination.

I was unprepared for the sense of relief that I felt on January 20 when Biden and Harris were sworn in. I knew I would be happy about the change of leadership, but didn't realize how much better I would feel. I was also surprised by the relief I felt when I got my first vaccination. It was as though an unwieldy bundle of wet laundry had been lifted off my shoulders. My brain is a little clearer and my step a little lighter.

When I look around, I see that there is much to do. People to vaccinate, ongoing racism to address, farmworkers to protect, people in need of stable income, housing, better access to childcare and health care. It's time to get back to work. Now, at least, it feels that we have the tools we need to address these problems. It is a matter of coming up with the collective will.

Be kind to yourself, stay safe, and keep working for justice.



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

RCWMS appreciates contributions of time, energy, money, and stock. 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.

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