

South of the Garden

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

Volume 46, Number 2

June 2025

Summer

by Jeanette Stokes

I love summer, which I claim begins in May. I associate my end of May birthday with warm weather and swimming in Oklahoma where I grew up. This year I was looking forward to swimming in Durham in May, but then I fell. (Read more about that inside this newsletter.)

While healing from my fall, I have helped with final preparations for several of our projects from the comfort of my living room couch. *STITCHING OUR STORIES: Community, Imagination, & Spirit*, our quilt exhibition at Cassilhaus in Chapel Hill, opened in late May. The exhibition features work by three NC artists, Kimberley Pierce Cartwright, Jereann King Johnson, and Sauda Zahra. We promise to offer more opportunities for you to visit this beautiful gallery to view these amazing quilts later this season.

KINDRED SPIRITS: A Convergence of African American Quilters 2025 will take place June 19-21 at the Durham Convention Center. Mark your calendar for the free public pop-up quilt show on the evening of June 20. The theme for the show is *Space and Time—Quilting Afrofuturism*. Come and see!

HEMEGROWN: NC Women's Preaching Festival is planned for October 2-3, 2025 at Trinity Avenue Presbyterian Church in Durham. The theme (in line with current political struggles) is *Digging Deep, Rising Up*. The festival has a great team this year being guided by Racquel Gill, our theologian in residence, and intern Anna Holmes Blair. Stay tuned for more details.

Our new Anita McLeod intern Lara Struckman has joined us for the summer. She has already proved to be invaluable by installing quilts and patching walls. As usual we and our interns are learning skills none of us imagined a year ago.

We have said a fond goodbye to intern Latifat Odotunde with whom we enjoyed working for the past year. Claire Hambrick and Anna Holmes Blair will continue as interns through the fall. Film intern Gi Chun has received a grant from Duke University to support their work on our Jereann King Johnson Documentary Project this summer. Gi has been helping us organize assets (photographs and video and audio recordings). She has also been collecting some new video footage.

We are so grateful for the attention and effort of these brilliant young people who work with us. For me being in relationships with them is just about the best part of working at RCWMS. They give me lots of hope. Some people wonder whether there are any feminists in the younger generations. I'm here to tell you that there are. They are strong, clear, and will carry the vision of a more just world into the future.



The Opulent Injustice of Fannie Lou Hamer / Civil Rights, Voting Rights,
Kimberley Pierce Cartwright

Quilts

by Jeanette Stokes

Quilts have long fascinated me. I first took a quilting class in Chapel Hill in my early twenties, made a few pillows, and that was that. But my interest was piqued, and I kept my eye on quilts, attended the occasional quilt show, and once even bought hand-dyed fabrics and made simple quilted Christmas stockings.

Nearly twenty years ago, RCWMS sponsored *ART & THE FEMININE DIVINE*, a month-long exhibition in downtown Durham featuring 100 artists. From that show, I especially remember quilted pieces by Candace Thomas. Then in 2009, we hosted a textile exhibit *STRENGTH FROM ALL MY ROOTS: An Exhibition of Textile Arts Honoring the Legacy of Pauli Murray*, which was part of a local effort to get the Episcopal Church to recognize the Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray as a saint. In the process of inviting submissions for that exhibition, I became better acquainted with the African American Quilt Circle of Durham and the Heritage Quilters in Warrenton.

When the pandemic hit in 2020, I started watching zoom classes led by Sherri Lynn Wood, a quilter who used to live in Durham. After a few months, I actually started sewing quilts in the improvisational style Sherri teaches.

Also during the pandemic, quilter Jereann King Johnson made a Zoom presentation about quilts and quilting for RCWMS, which ultimately led to our starting a documentary film project about Jereann.

We then invited quilter Kimberley Pierce Cartwright to be the RCWMS artist in residence for 2022 and 2023. This collaboration birthed our first African-American quilt conference, *KINDRED SPIRITS*. The conference and pop-up quilt show took place in June 2023, with forty quilter participants and 500 visitors. The second *KINDRED SPIRITS* will take place this year at the Durham Convention Center on June 19-21, 2025.

In the summer of 2024, Kimberley was invited to be an artist in residence at Cassilhaus in Chapel Hill. While watching her work, Cassilhaus director Frank Konhaus became fascinated by her process. Knowing of RCWMS's involvement with quilters, Frank proposed that we join forces to host a quilt exhibition. The result is *STITCHING OUR STORIES: Community, Imagination, and Spirit* featuring works by three NC artists: Kimberley Pierce Cartwright, Jereann King Johnson, and Sauda Zahra. The exhibition will be on view at Cassilhaus until August 31, 2025.

Chloé Griffin Wright, Bacarri Byrd, and Claire Hambrick were invited to join me on the curatorial team because of what they each brought to the project. Chloé is a PhD student in Religion at UNC and brings a well-developed curiosity about the meaning of

(Continued on back.)

Calendar

* = RCWMS events. More info: rcwms.org/events.

*Now–August 31, 2025

STITCHING OUR STORIES: Community, Imagination, & Spirit.

Cassilhaus, Chapel Hill, NC

RCWMS and Cassilhaus are pleased to announce STITCHING OUR STORIES. Featuring work by three NC artists, Kimberley Pierce Cartwright, Jereann King Johnson, and Sauda Zahra, this exhibition challenges participants to reimagine the role of quilting beyond its historical context into a future where textiles become tools for inspiration, imagination, transformation, and ancestral connection. FREE. Watch for opportunities to visit the gallery.

June 4, 2025, Wednesday, 8:30–2:30 pm ET

PRACTICE, POETRY, AND PLAY: Clergy Together for a

Day of Re-creation, Song, and Joy

Avila Retreat Center, Durham, NC

Sponsors: Peace Hill, RCWMS, & Duke Univ. Chapel

Register: peacehillavila.org/event

Cost: \$35

June 6–7, 2025, Friday–Saturday

PERFECT PARTNERS: Soul Collage® & the

Enneagram: A Soul Collage® Retreat

217 Union St., Cary, NC

The Enneagram is so much more than a personality typing system. It is a tool for personal/spiritual growth. With SoulCollage®, we will explore our creativity and spirituality. When we couple our understanding of our Enneagram type with SoulCollage®, great insights are possible, and personal and spiritual growth occurs. On Friday evening, we will review the Enneagram.

Saturday we will continue exploring the Enneagram and incorporate SoulCollage®. SoulCollage® beginners are welcome. Please have an idea of your Enneagram type. Email if you are unsure of your Enneagram type. Leader: Becky Hambrick, M.Ed. offers spiritual direction, dream groups, Enneagram coaching, and SoulCollage® workshops/retreats

Cost: \$250 includes materials, snacks, & Sat. lunch.

Register: www.sacredspaceforyou.com/#soulcollage

June 10, 2025, 11:30 am–1:30 pm (each 2nd & 4th Tues.)

ART OF CONSCIOUS AGING: A Group for Women

Newcomers welcome. No fee to attend. No need to

register. (via Zoom)

Info: RCWMS, info@rcwms.org.

June 18, 2025, Wednesday, 7:00–8:30 pm (each 3rd Wed.)

THE MINISTRY OF BLACK WOMEN'S SELF-CARE

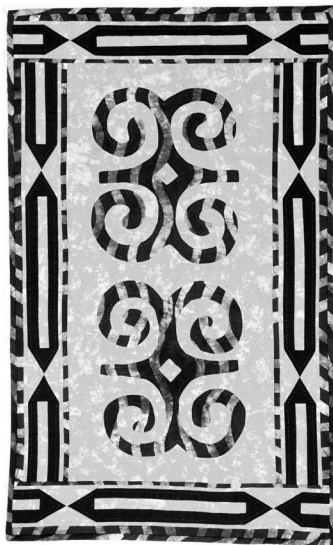
with Kim McCrae (via Zoom)

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. Self-care is a work of self-love, communal love, and Womanist Ethicisms; 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 McCrae is an intentional lover of humanity and actively lives the self-care life about which she teaches and advocates.

Register: www.rcwms.org/events

(Continued next column.)



African Design: Humility Together with Strength, Jereann King Johnson

June 19, 2025, 7:00 pm (monthly on the 3rd Thursday)
TARA PRACTICE: Practicing the Sadhanas of the Twenty-One Taras with Rachael Wooten (via Zoom)
Drawing from her book, *Tara: The Liberating Power of the Female Buddha*, Wooten will offer teachings about Tara and lead a guided meditation.

Leader: Rachael Wooten, PhD, Jungian analyst, writer, and Tibetan Buddhist dharma teacher.

FREE: Join the call: rachaelwootenauthor.com/practices

*June 19–21, 2025

KINDRED SPIRITS: A Convergence of African American Quilters

Durham Convention Center, Durham, NC

Theme: *Space and Time—Quilting Afrofuturism*

African American quilters will gather for a time of sisterhood, exploration, and fun during Juneteenth weekend for workshops with top quilting professionals. The public is invited to a free pop-up quilt show on Friday evening, June 20.

Cost: \$150–200, includes conference and 2 lunches

Info: rcwms.org/kindred-spirits-quilting-conference/

June 20, 2025, Friday, 9:00 am–3:00 pm ET

SEASONS WITHIN

Avila Retreat Center, Durham, NC

In the midst of changes, challenges, and choices, how do you keep the music of your heart alive? How do you allow your soul to continue to sing its deepest longing in a world that often seems gone mad? We'll gather as beloved community and share our hearts' songs through meditation, stories, labyrinth play, and even making melodies, strung together by love and light. Facilitator Shirli Hughes says: "As a musician, I am always listening for hidden melodies, found in unexpected places that bring joy to my soul. This is the joy that I want to share with you and watch in wonder as you discover and reconnect with your own inner song, waiting to be set free!"

Sponsor: Peace Hill at Avila

Cost: \$35. Register: peacehillavila.org/event

July 24, 2025, Thursday, 7:00–8:30 pm

PUBLIC TALK with Lama Rod Owens

Eno River UU Fellowship, Durham, NC

In a time of systems collapse and rapid change, we are invited to remember who we are and to resolve to do the work of learning to be free in an unfree world. This ticket option is for the Thursday evening talk only (not the retreat). Please note, registration for the weekend retreat includes Thursday admission.

Sponsors: Bhumi Durham and Peace Hill at Avila
Register: peacehillavila.org/event/public-talk-with-lama-rod-owens/

July 25–27, 2025, Friday–Sunday

THE WERK OF GETTING FREE, Lama Rod Owens

Avila Retreat Center, Durham, NC

We are living through an apocalypse, a period of deep truth unveiling. This revelation seems overwhelming especially as it calls into question our participation in social systems that perpetuate violence, including racism and white supremacy. Through skillful practice, we can meet these challenges, remember who we are, and lean into love, community, and belonging. Join Lama Rod Owens as he guides us into relationship with our suffering and with both the seen and the unseen worlds to do the work of abolishing systems of violence. Through connection to the elders, the elements, land, indigenous wisdom, our magic, and our practice, we can learn to be the medicine we and our communities need.

Sponsors: Bhumi Durham in partnership with Peace Hill at Avila

Register: peacehillavila.org/event/the-werk-of-getting-free/

(Continued next column.)

Calendar...

*July 27, 2025, 2:00–4:00 pm EDT (via Zoom)

WRITING THE BODY

It's a well-researched fact that we store our emotional experiences in our physical bodies. On anniversaries of loss, for example, it is common to feel body pain, heaviness, or fatigue. In this workshop, we will practice feeling into our body stories safely in order to capture them in words. As a group, we will learn about how the body stores memory, and why, and take home practices for listening to the stories our bodies want to tell us. This course is appropriate for writers at every level and of every genre. Writers will take home a packet of writing examples as well as prompts, and can contact Shawna for written feedback within two weeks of this workshop.

Leader: Shawna Ayoub is a brown, queer, Durham-based writer and instructor whose work prioritizes the engagement of difficult topics.

Cost: \$75, \$100. (You may choose all 5 Ayoub workshops this year for \$325 or any 3 for \$200.)

Register: rcwms.org/events

*July 29, 2025, Wednesday, 6:30–8:00 pm

QUARTERLY HEALTH & WELLBEING SERIES with Solita Denard, 3rd session in the 2025 series (via Zoom)

A series for individuals who can benefit from learning in community and will commit to moving toward their own vision for improved health and wellbeing.

The 4th session: October 29.

Leader: Solita Denard, Health Integration 629, LLC,

Cost: \$229, includes a total of 8 coaching sessions

Register: rcwms.org/events, contact: info@rcwms.org

*September 21, 2025, 2:00–4:00 pm (via Zoom)

BECOMING THE SECOND PERSON

Is there a story that's stuck inside you because it feels too raw to be writeable, too vulnerable to be readable? What if you found out there is a way to create safe distance while still telling that hard story? To minimize trauma and (re)gain control of your narrative by no longer being your story's first person?

Writers will practice using narrative distance as a tool to explore their stories in new ways. You will take home a packet of writing examples as well as prompts, and can contact Shawna for written feedback within two weeks of this workshop.

Leader: Shawna Ayoub is a brown, queer, Durham-based writer and instructor whose work prioritizes the engagement of difficult topics.

Cost: \$75, \$100. All 5 workshops this year for \$325 or any 3 for \$200.

*November 16, 2025, 2–4:00 pm (via Zoom)

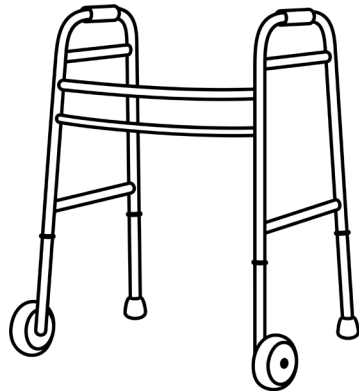
REMEMBERING THOSE WE MISS

Writing letters can be a way to express our love and celebrate the relationships we've shared. They can help us preserve memories and stories, confront unfinished business, and expose ourselves to things we may be avoiding. This is especially true when we are writing to those who are gone from our lives. Together we will examine our grief through the epistolary form. In a safe and supportive space, we will write letters to those we have lost as an act of self-care. Writers will take home a packet of writing examples as well as prompts, and can contact Shawna for written feedback within two weeks of this workshop.

Leader: Shawna Ayoub is a brown, queer, Durham-based writer and instructor whose work prioritizes the engagement of difficult topics.

Cost: \$75, \$100. All 5 workshops this year for \$325 or any 3 for \$200. Register: rcwms.org/events

(Continued on back.)



Oleksandr Panasovskyi/
Shutterstock.com

Falling

by Jeanette Stokes

North Duke Street looked different out the back window of the ambulance that Friday morning. Josh and Brett had been kind and confident as they helped me down the front steps of our 1921 bungalow in central Durham and onto a gurney. They loaded me into their ambulance and headed up Duke Street toward Duke Regional Hospital. An hour earlier I had tripped over some wayward shoes in the back hall of our house and landed *splat* on my right hip. After sitting still for a few minutes to assess the damage and calling a retired doctor neighbor for advice, my spouse and I decided it would be wise to call 911 to get my banged-up hip checked out.

Once we arrived at the Emergency Department, I was amazed at how quiet and orderly everything was. After images and consultations the orthopedic staff determined that my hip had indeed sustained a fracture. They said they needed to keep me overnight, in order to devise a surgical plan, and moved me to a room on the orthopedic floor. Finally about 9:30 PM a young orthopedic resident arrived to discuss the options: insert three screws to hold the bone in place while it heals or give me a totally new bionic hip. As she described a total hip replacement, my body began to shake. Though I might have just been cold, I took it as a sign that this body didn't want a huge invasive major surgery. So I said I was more drawn to the three screws.

After more discussions and explanations on Saturday morning with the orthopedic surgeon, Kathryn O'Connor, that's what I chose. Hip pinning is what they call the three screws. In the operating room, a female anesthesiologist knocked me out and Dr. O'Connor inserted the screws in the top of my femur. I was delighted to have of all these female doctors. Oh, and the head nurse was a guy.

After two more nights in the hospital, very little sleep, being waked up at midnight and 4:00 AM, bad food, and kind attention from nurses and assistants, I was sent home with a walker and instructions: "Don't put more than fifty percent of your weight on the leg with the injured hip, and spend as much time as possible spread out flat so the hip flexor won't foreshorten."

By then it was Monday and I was supposed to be at the coast leading a writing retreat. While I missed walking beside the ocean and long periods to think and write, I didn't have to cancel much, because I didn't have anything scheduled in town. So, I rested. Dwight became a full-time caregiver. Friends came to visit and brought food. I posted about the experience on Facebook and received loads of messages of condolence and support. Time passed.

Two weeks after falling, I visited Dr. O'Connor, who said everything looked fine, keep doing what I was doing, and come back in four more weeks. So as I write I'm stretched out on the sofa in our living room, grateful that I didn't hit my head on the doorjamb or a nearby radiator when I fell, and grateful to all the kind people who have offered to run errands or who have brought books, flowers, food, or conversations.

Since I fell, two friends have had scheduled hip replacement surgeries. As we've compared notes on healing, I realized that this is the way my aging crowd is going to spend the next twenty years. We'll be caring for one another or being cared for. It seems to me that that is a big part of what community is about. I've heard Karen Ziegler say that community is an antidote to fascism, and I believe it.

Quilts...

things. Bacarri has a background in museum and exhibition work and excels at communications, and Claire is a professional photographer who has an eye for exhibit design. Together we learned by doing and selected works that sparked conversations with each other and with viewers.

As a team, we offer our deep gratitude to Frank and Ellen for hosting us at Cassilhaus and mounting the exhibition, to Dasean Burnette for his graphic design work, to RCWMS intern Lara Struckman for quiet and determined assistance with hanging the exhibition, to Grace Chun for stitching in a pinch, to MJ Sharp for beautiful photographs, and to Cici Stevens whose contributions made this show more beautiful and engaging than we could have imagined.

A special word of thanks to the Heritage Quilters and the African American Quilt Circle of Durham for welcoming us and allowing us to drink in the beauty, power, skill, and inspiration of their work.

And to Kimberley, Sauda, and Jereann, thank you for the vision, skill, and audacity you have shown in bringing forth images that are larger than life, brighter than day, and bolder than the creeping tyranny around us today. Stitch by stitch, your quilts form a prayer for justice, a call to action, and an inspiration for dreaming a better world.



DEI

In the face of rising fascism and authoritarianism in the USA, we at RCWMS continue to build community. We create opportunities to gather, support, encourage, and inspire one another. We try to honor the principals of DEI, which are under attack at present. It seems the right and just thing to do to strive for diversity, equity, and inclusion.

I've been thinking about the current administration's push back against DEI. The opposite of diversity is uniformity or homogeneity. The opposite of equity is inequity or prejudice. And the opposite of inclusion is segregation and discrimination. So if the MAGA folks are against DEI, they must be for homogeneity, prejudice, and segregation. We've been there. We've hardly begun the struggle against these evils. And now we have people in power touting the value of inequity. It is cause for concern. And action. -JS



A section of *Freedom Ways*
Jereann King Johnson

Calendar...

*September 19–26, 2025, or January 2–9, 2026
WEEKS OF QUIET & WRITING for Women
Trinity Center, near Morehead City, NC
Spend a week of quiet and writing with a supportive group of women at the beautiful Trinity Center.
Leader: Jeanette Stokes
Cost: about \$1,000. Single room & meals included.
Contact: jeanette@rcwms.org

ONGOING

RCWMS's sister organization, Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER), offers several free monthly gatherings via Zoom. All are welcome. No charge, but you must register to receive a link.
Info: www.waterwomensalliance.org

SOLO WANDERINGS & SOCIAL WANDERINGS!
Creative Retreats @ The Stable, a retreat, Durham, NC
Come alone or bring friends and enjoy a self-guided art retreat. Ages 12 and up.
Leader: Claudia Fulshaw, artist & retreat leader.
Cost: \$115 solo / \$75 extra person; overnight is extra.
Contact: artwanders.com, claudia@artwanders.com



RCWMS is a forty-seven-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 Fnd., Emerald Isle Realty, Inavale Fnd., the Paul Green Fnd., the Triangle Community Fnd., and Invest to Restart, a program of the Durham Arts Council supported by the City of Durham American Rescue Plan funds.

TRUSTEES: Liddy Grantland, Cris Rivera, Marion Thullbery, Angie Wright, and Chelsea Yarborough

STAFF: Jeanette Stokes, Executive Director; Chloe Griffin, Programs & Special Projects; Bacarri Byrd, Communications & Development; Beth Weiss, Data Manager; MJ Sharp, Artist in Residence; Racquel Gill, Theologian in Residence; Anita McLeod interns: Anna Holmes Blair, Claire Hambrick, and Lara Struckman; Gi Chun, film intern; Oliver Henderson, high school intern.



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.

YOUR MAILING LABEL shows the year and month your subscription will expire. 2509 = 2025 September.

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