

South of the Garden

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

Volume 47, Number 3

September 2026

Fall

by Jeanette Stokes

As RCWMS enters its 50th year (that means we just had a birthday and turned 49) we are so grateful for friends, participants, and supporters new and old. This upcoming anniversary reminds me of the biblical tradition of Jubilee. In the Hebrew scriptures, every seven years, fields were to lie fallow and after seven cycles of seven, in the fiftieth year slaves were to be freed, debts forgiven, and property returned. At 250 years of age (that's five cycles of 50 years) I'd say the USA has a lot of freedoms to repair, debts to forgive, and property to return. I'm also thinking about what Jubilee means for RCWMS and for each of us.

One thing it might mean is celebration. And with celebration comes gratitude. We are fortunate to have brilliant, generous folks give their time and energy in service to RCWMS. We are so fortunate to have their attention, one and all. Grieving the loss of our dear board chair, Liddy Grantland, I am especially aware that our time is limited on this earth, and when we give of our time and attention to anyone or anything, it is a precious gift.

I want to offer special thanks to two people. Nancy Rosebaugh and Marcy Litle have given untold hours to RCWMS over the years to edit and proofread our publications. They, along with staff member Rachel Sauls, make sure that our email calendars, newsletters, and books are clear and accurate. Thank you!

Here's a quick report on some current happenings at RCWMS. After five months with no running water in our office, four plumbers spent four hours installing a new waterline to our building. Toting jugs of water became part of our routine, and we are grateful to give this up!

We have been making plans, raising money, and submitting grant proposals for:

- The Jereann King Johnson documentary film, which is coming along nicely (see more inside).
- HOMEGROWN: NC Women's Preaching Festival (November 5, 2026).
- Kindred Spirits, the weekend of Juneteenth, 2027.
- Our 50th Anniversary (August 17, 2027).

As we approach our 50th anniversary celebration, we'd like to hear from YOU! We invite you to submit memories or reflections on how RCWMS has made a difference in your life. We are looking for written pieces as well as photographs. We'll gather these and some may be published in our 50th anniversary commemorative book. Please send short written pieces or images to info@rcwms.org. And one more time, thank you!



Photo by J. Stokes

Liddy

by Jeanette Stokes

"I want to see you." When your twenty-eight-year-old RCWMS board chair with stage four metastatic cancer calls from a hospital in Columbia, SC, and says those words, it's time to drop everything and get in the car. So Dwight and I drove through a rain storm that resembled a car wash and arrived in Columbia on a Friday evening in late May.

The next morning, we made our way to Lexington Medical Center in West Columbia and found Liddy in reasonably good spirits and only moderate pain. We were joined in her hospital room by three of her friends from L'Arche in Arlington, VA, where she worked for a couple of years after college, two friends from Durham, and a set of grandparents. Her dad welcomed us all. It was a happy day for Liddy with these beloveds at her side. She grinned and giggled and hugged people as they came and went. She loved people well, and they loved her back.

I met Liddy in 2019 when she applied to be an intern with the Resource Center. She was a Duke senior when she began with us in August of that year. We arranged an internship for her and Shelley, a Duke Divinity student she knew from the Duke Wesley Foundation. The two of them sat on our office sofa and transcribed Meinrad Craighead tapes for hours and hours. We were working on some Meinrad videos to post on the web. When I look at that sofa now, I can almost see her sitting there.

Liddy and I hit it off as sometimes happens with interns. After she graduated and took the job in Arlington, she'd stop by when driving between DC and her home in Columbia.

I told Liddy I liked the essays she had published in the *Duke Chronicle* so much that I thought we should collect them into a book. Her beautiful essays were about living with pain, which she did because of scoliosis and an operation that straightened her spine but left her with persistent pain. As she said, living with pain made her more compassionate toward other people. We published her collection, *Flesh & Bones: Learning to Love this Body*, in 2021.

When RCWMS needed a board chair this year, Liddy graciously accepted the position. She missed her second meeting as chair, because she was in the hospital. Liddy died on May 30, 2026 at the age of twenty-eight. I will always treasure my memories of this bright, beautiful, kind, funny young woman who gave so freely of her time, love, attention and wisdom. Liddy Grantland is now with the ancestors. Not only that, she has become one of them.

Calendar

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

Now–October 3, 2026

BEFORE I GO: Kimberley Pierce Cartwright's Quilt & Clay Exhibition

Diggs Gallery, Winston-Salem State Univ., W-S, NC
"Before I Go" offers a narrative framework for the work of this quilt and clay artist. Rather than centering what remains unfinished, this work focuses on what is preserved, what endures beyond the artist's hand. "Before I go, I want the world to know..."
Cost: Free.

*September 8, 2026, 11:30 am–1:30 pm (2nd Tuesdays)
ART OF CONSCIOUS AGING: A Group for Women
Newcomers welcome. No fee to attend. No need to register. (Via Zoom.) Email info@rcwms.org for a link to join the meeting.

September 10, 2026, Thursday, 9:30 am–2:45 pm
BAPTIST WOMEN IN MINISTRY NC Symposium
Knollwood Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, NC
Join Baptist Women in Ministry for an annual symposium around this year's theme, "Better Together."

Cost: \$38, includes lunch. Free for college students and divinity students.

More: www.bwimnc.org/symposium

*September 16, 2026, 7:00–8:30 pm (every 3rd Wednesday)
THE MINISTRY OF BLACK WOMEN'S SELF-CARE with Kim McCrae (via Zoom)
Self-care is a multi-generational, multicultural work of self-love, communal love, and Womanist ethicism. We offer practical tools for Black women doing all forms of ministry, personally, in church & community.
Leader: Kimberly McCrae is a lover of humanity and actively lives the self-care life.
Register: www.rcwms.org/events

September 17, 2026, 7:00 pm (every 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. Free.
Leader: Rachael Wooten, PhD, Jungian analyst, writer, and Tibetan Buddhist dharma teacher.
Join: rachaelwootenauthor.com/practices

September 18–20, 2026, Friday–Sunday
ENDS OF THE EARTH: A Contemplative Retreat
Avila Center, 711 Mason Rd, Durham, NC
Slow your pace, gather for thoughtful listening, enjoy nutritious meals, and restore your energy for engagement in the world. Retreat includes teachings, practices, and music grounded in the Celtic Christian traditions, which took shape in Scotland and Ireland beginning in the 5th century.
Leaders: Terry Allebaugh & Esther Hethcox, with Chef Milton Brasher-Cunningham and Musician Charles Pettee.
Cost: \$175–350. Scholarships available.
More: www.peacehillavila.org/



September 19, 2026, 9:30 am–4:30 pm
UNDER THE HARVEST MOON: A SoulCollage® Day Apart
217 Union St, Cary, NC

September's Harvest Moon invites us to pause and notice what has been growing in our lives or might be ready to be harvested. We'll use images, imagination, reflection, and the wisdom of SoulCollage® cards to explore this season.
Leader: Becky Hambrick, M.Ed. is a spiritual director, an Enneagram coach, and Soul Collage® leader.
Cost: \$125, includes materials and lunch.

*October 4–9, 2026, Sunday–Friday (5 nights)
WEEK OF QUIET & WRITING FOR WOMEN
Trinity Center, Salter Path, NC (near Morehead City)
Wouldn't you like a week full of quiet days to think and write? Come spend a week of quiet and writing with a supportive group of women at the beautiful Trinity Center on Emerald Isle, NC. We observe silence in the daytime so participants can read, write, or rest. In the evenings we gather to reflect on the day and often share our work with one another. Room and meals are included. Everyone gets her own room. Her own space. Her own time.

Leader: Jeanette Stokes

Cost: \$900. Single room and meals included.

Contact & registration: info@rcwms.org.

*October 10, 2026, 6:30 pm
WORK IN PROGRESS with Courtney Ariel Bowden
Northstar Church of the Arts, Durham, NC
Durham-based singer-songwriter and doctoral candidate Courtney Ariel Bowden blends music and scholarship in her research about Black women's relationality and friendship-making as a spiritual and creative practice under the constraints of colonialism and capitalism. She will perform songs from her upcoming album and share thoughts from her in-process dissertation, to prompt a communal discussion about the creativity, vulnerability, and transformative possibilities of friendship.

NOTE: "Women" is inclusive of cis and trans women, femmes, gender non-conforming folks, etc. Event is for Black women and the people who love them well. Perspectives and voices of Black people will be foregrounded. All attendees should be old enough to be quiet during the performance.

Leader: Courtney Ariel Bowden

Cost: \$0, \$5, or \$10.

Contact & registration: info@rcwms.org.

*October 24, 2026, Saturday, 10:30 am–12:30 pm
ANCHORING THROUGH THE ENNEAGRAM
Trinity Ave. Presbyterian Church, Durham, NC
The Enneagram offers a helpful anchor, providing each of us with insights from our number structure that can help us navigate life's moving pieces. Whether you are a creative imagining what's next, a parent hoping to find your center, a retiree considering how you want to spend your days, or simply someone curious about what can sustain you amid the movement, this workshop is for you.
Leader: Rev. Dr. Chelsea Yarborough
Cost: \$30–50
Contact & registration: info@rcwms.org.

JKJ Film

by Jeanette Stokes

Though I've never been a film buff, I've enjoyed films all my life. During my childhood, I saw *The Sound of Music* and other movies of the 1960s at the Brook Theater, our neighborhood movie theater in Tulsa. I also watched my father's home movies, especially the ones of his 1957 trip to Russia. In college, a boyfriend and I made regular trips to UMass Amherst to watch old movies. I never had any intention of becoming a filmmaker, but over the years, RCWMS has produced two documentaries, a fifteen-minute film about Durham environmental artist Bryant Holsenbeck and an hour-long film about visionary artist Meinrad Craighead.

Now we are working on a documentary film about Jereann King Johnson (JKJ), a North Carolina quilter, activist and community builder. The idea for this film project came from a women's group Jereann and I belong to. The group has met monthly for over twenty years, for potluck dinner and conversation. At a meeting shortly before the pandemic hit, Jereann told us that she had given a presentation about quilting for a humanities group in another state. We all said we wanted a presentation like that, and someone added, "There should be a film about Jereann!" Once the pandemic was upon us and the group began meeting online, it was a perfect setup for Jereann to show slides of her work and share her journey with quilts. Later, RCWMS invited her to give a presentation on quilts as one of our online programs. And after that, RCWMS picked up the challenge to make a film about Jereann.

We began filming during the weekend of Juneteenth, 2023, in Warrenton, North Carolina, where Jereann lives and quilts. Later we followed her to the first "Kindred Spirits: A Convergence of African American Quilters" in Durham. Three years later, I'm happy to report that we have raised \$147,000, written many (mostly unsuccessful) grant proposals, and filmed sixty-five hours of gorgeous video. Two directors, five cinematographers, and two editors have worked on the project. Filmmaker Maj Uchibeke is currently working with the project and we have added some new folks to the crew.

I met Maj when he was a student of Julia Scatliff O'Grady's at St. Andrews University in Laurinburg, NC. After graduation he earned an MFA in film at the University of Southern California. Originally from Nigeria, he made an amazing film about environmental degradation caused by big oil companies in the Ogoni region of Nigeria. He lives in Florida now, close enough to Jereann's hometown of Bainbridge, Georgia, to film her there.

Jim Haverkamp will edit the film. He's a filmmaker who helped us on a couple of projects nearly twenty years ago. After a decade of operating Shadowbox Studio, a small affordable, rentable space in East Durham for artists, photographers and filmmakers, he and his business partner are opening a small

(Continued next column.)



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art-house theater in downtown Durham called Skin & Bones (starving artists are skin and bones), which is due to open in September. The theater will be located at 118 W. Parrish Street and will seat about seventy-five.

Donna Campbell has come on board to assist with the producing side. She and Georgann Eubanks, both of Minnow Media, made our Meinrad Craighead film.

I've also been having frequent conversations with Tamar Rachkovsky, whom I met when she was studying for an MFA in film at the Duke Center for Documentary Studies (CDS). Tamar has done some editing on the film and has been a great guide in thinking about steps along the way.

Though I helped raise money for our first two films, I find myself much more involved in the making of the current film. In the process, I've needed to learn more about Jereann's life and acquire some rudimentary understanding of the actual process of filmmaking.

In 2025, I recorded weekly interviews with Jereann. In the process of these rambling conversations, Jereann told stories from the various periods of her life, and I got to ask lots of questions. She has had a fascinating life, moving from tiny Bainbridge, GA, to Atlanta, to Washington, DC and then landing in Warrenton, NC. Once transcribed, these interviews allowed Rachel Sauls and me to create a timeline of Jereann's life and a short biography.

This spring, I took a six-week class on how to produce a documentary film. The class at CDS was taught by Rebekah Fergusson and included eight eager students. I worried I'd be the most ignorant student. But while there was a lot of technical filmmaking stuff I didn't understand, it turned out that I already had some skills needed to be a producer—the same skills I use in directing a nonprofit organization. I've been using many of these skills for years, skills such as working with other people, solving problems, budgeting, and fundraising. One useful thing I learned in the class is that a producer should get a therapist, because she is not allowed to complain to anyone else involved in the film. Other people get to complain to her.

In April, I attended Durham's Full Frame Documentary Film Festival. In June, RCWMS Program Director Chloé Griffin and I went to the Southern Documentary Fund Convening, also in Durham. These experiences helped me get clear that I want our Jereann film to be closer to sixty minutes, not the ninety minutes of standard films, for two reasons: I get tired watching after an hour, and longer films are more expensive to make. While our film may cost \$250,000 when all is said and done, that's a whole lot better than the \$750,000+ that commercial documentaries cost.

I've had the video footage for the film in my office for a couple of years but didn't know how to watch it, didn't even know what to plug into the scary-looking external hard drive. So I signed up for an

(Continued on back page.)

Calendar...

*November 5, 2026, Thursday
HOMEGROWN: NC Women's Preaching Festival
Trinity Avenue Presbyterian Church, Durham, NC
A one-day gathering, bringing together clergywomen from across North Carolina for a full day of preaching, worship, learning, and fellowship. Centered on the theme "Cross-Pollination: Shared Wisdom Across Places, Spaces, & Identities," we'll gather to share experiences, exchange ideas, and foster meaningful connections across communities, traditions, and lived experiences.
Registration & details: ncwomenpreaching.com/

November 12–15, 2026, Thursday–Sunday
Avila Center, 711 Mason Rd, Durham, NC
HEALING, RESILIENCY, AND LIBERATION: A Retreat with Lama Rod Owens
Explore both personal and collective resiliency through somatic based mindfulness practice, grief work, chanting, and prayer. We will explore themes of spiritual abolition, liberatory care, grieving as care work, as well as what it means to be a love-centered agent of liberation in this moment. BIPOC and LGBTQ+ folks have priority.
Cost: \$600–900, w/room and meals. Scholarships.
More: www.peacehillavila.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 & SOCIAL WANDERINGS: Self-Guided Creative Retreats (ongoing, day or overnight)
The Stable, a private retreat in Durham, NC
Come experience a solo creative retreat, or bring friends. Choose: Poetry & Art Journals, Vision Board Journals, Peace Poles, Labyrinths, Forest Bathing & Earth Art, or R&R&Art. Materials, instructions, beverages, & snacks included. Experience a self-guided, relaxing, soul-smiling day (add a night or two!) For ages 12+.
Leader: Claudia Fulshaw, graphic designer, artist, and wanderer who leads creative retreats.
Cost: \$130 solo/\$90 additional person, plus room
Contact: claudia@artwanders.com.

*WEEKS OF WRITING & QUIET
Trinity Center, Emerald Isle, near Morehead City, NC
Jan. 2–8, 2027, May 9–16, 2027, Oct. 3–10, 2027



HaAbWa/Shutterstock.com

JKJ Film...

editing class at CDS. The teacher, Hareth Yousef, a Palestinian filmmaker, taught me how to watch the raw video footage, gave us good experience editing with Premier Pro, and taught us about *za'atar*, a traditional Palestinian spice dip. I edited a couple of very short videos and found it more complicated than I had imagined. While I don't really need to edit, it feels good to know a bit more about it and I am happy to be able to watch the hours of video we have so far. Plus I got to dip some pita bread in *za'atar*.

This fall, we'll write more grant proposals. They help us get clearer about what we are doing. At various points, we thought the film might be about WVSP, the radio station where Jereann worked, or about Warren County and Black land loss. But each time we wandered away, we came back to this: it is a film about Jereann, about her passion, persistence, and love, her quilting, organizing, and community building. Jereann is excited about the project, and she named the film "Some Kinda Spirit."

Thank you for your belief in this project and your support. God willing and the creek don't rise, we'll



RCWMS is a 49-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. We mentor and encourage young women, religious leaders, writers, artists, 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, Emerald Isle Realty, Paul Green Foundation, Triangle Community Foundation, and Durham Arts Council.

TRUSTEES: Courtney Ariel Bowden, Cris Rivera, MJ Sharp, Angie Wright, and Chelsea Yarborough.

STAFF: Jeanette Stokes, Executive Director; Chloé Griffin, Programming; Bacarri Byrd, Communications & Development; Rachel Sauls, Managing Director; Beth Weiss, Data; Claire Hambrick, Arts & 50th Anniversary Curator; and fellows Margie Peeler and Hilary Pollan.



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.

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