

Honorary Member Carlynn Reed



I believe just about all dance styles are opportunities to honour God and to grow in our understanding and experience of His love for us. Currently an avid swing dancer, I have been intrigued with Gospel Swing music, and was inspired to choreograph with my partner a wild and wonderful dance which stretches us from slow anticipatory blues to fast paced enthusiastic Charleston. Add a few high flying aerial moves and we feel the pull and power of the resurrection in the song, "Ain't No Grave Gonna' Hold My Body Down". The music and dance command our excitement about God.

For the past 12 years I have also studied contact improv dance in which 2 or more dancers share a moving centre of gravity. We give weight and bear weight as we utilize the gentle force of momentum to move each other and ourselves through space in all directions. Kind attentiveness is at the core of this dance which highlights our mutual interdependence. It is always a story of grace and curiosity. People's lives, including my own, have been changed by regular attendance at contact dance jams. As a side benefit, my last bone density test showed I had the bones of a young adult! It comes from bearing the weight of my sister or brother in the dance, reminding me of Jesus' words, "Whoever will lose his life for my sake, will find it." The give-and-take in the dance builds peace and trust in our spirits and bodies.

In 2008 I had the privilege of sharing contact dance at the SDG Annual Festival through master classes and performance. As we briefly bore each other's weight on our backs we became deeply aware that we are built and wired to do this, to care for each other, to bear one another's burdens, and to allow ourselves to be carried for a time. It is the natural rhythm of life. Contact dance has a way of getting at our deepest needs and fears and longings. It leads us to the bosom of God.

In the last several years I have explored this dance form as well as improvisational theatre in a project which grew out of personal experiences in caregiving. For me it was caregiving for my older son, crippled by a pain condition. For my theatre partner it was his caregiving relationship with his mother who has Alzheimer's. The process of creating a theatre piece, much of which was captured on film for a documentary, transformed our homes into healing centres. As we examined the power of contact dance we saw how much like home it is. If we give our family relationships to the 'dance', truly incredible things begin to happen. People who see our show, "Let's Play House", which alternates between dramatic dialogue and dance, are staggered by how it touches their own lives and personal situations. We are now writing a book about our process and discoveries.