



# INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN DANCE FELLOWSHIP MAGAZINE

ICDF NETWORKS

ISSUE 5 | 2024



## The Future of ICDF Networks

AN ICDF EXCLUSIVE

7 NETWORKS  
ICDF RESOURCES

# Welcome to the fifth edition featuring 7 of our ICDF Networks.










Liesl Townsend



Sue Sutherland

## Joint Coordinators' Note

This magazine will share articles from seven of our networks.

-  Dance Teachers
-  Movement in Prayer
-  Sign Language
-  Ballroom
-  Dance Artists
-  Messianic Dance and Tambourine
-  Dance for Children

Each network brings together people from around the globe with similar interests, with the aim to encourage and inspire one another. This Fifth Edition includes a variety of articles, tips and advice from using technology to using the right dance skills and methods from dance teachers who have been in the field for more than 38 years.

There is so much trauma in the world today and Sue Hodson shares some of her thoughts on the use of improvisation in releasing trauma experienced in the body. Beth Bluett takes us into her home where she has created a studio which has transformed her teaching opportunities using Zoom technology to reach teachers across the globe.

Jackie Young and Belma Vardy share their testimonies that when we least expect it, God opens doors and opportunities that confirm He has our lives and destinies in His hands.

What a blessing we as dance and movement artists can be to those who cannot hear. Naomi Hayward gives us a glimpse of how she connects using sign language very creatively, to reach the hearing impaired in our communities.

Robin Joseph from South Africa is our new Coordinator for the Ballroom Dance Network. Help us welcome Robin as she begins to lead and share her expertise with all who are keen to join this Network.

We introduce you to Adam Koen a Butoh dancer. Read about Adam's journey to becoming a Christian Butoh dancer.

Ralph and Mindy Seta give us an update on their recent activities and Vera Chierico shares her five Dance Etiquette Tips when leading Biblical Dance Worship.

Our children are the future of ICDF. Read how teachers Belma, Anna, Lizzie and Helen have positively impacted children's lives through the teaching of dances and sharing of experiences during rehearsal sessions.

We want to let you know that we have vacancies for the Creative Arts and Social Concern, Dance Artists, Fitness, Wellbeing and Movement Meditation, Flags and Banners, and Youth Dance/Refresh Networks. Should any of these Networks interest you and you are able to assist us in Coordinating activities for these Networks, please make contact with us.

Happy reading everyone and let us know which articles you enjoyed the most so that we can provide you with more of the same.

God bless you

*Liesl & Sue*

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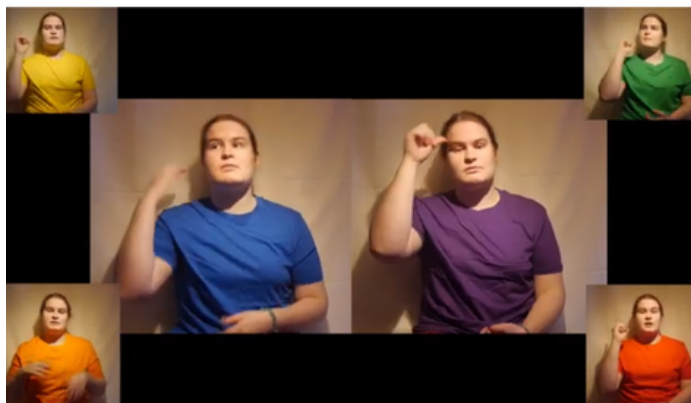
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Click on the links and access our ICDF Networks and Resources

# ICDF NETWORKS

ICDF's networks give opportunities for global networking and communicating between people who share the same interests, callings, or passions.

Visit our Website for more information on all our Networks [WWW.ICDF.COM](http://WWW.ICDF.COM)



## DANCE TEACHERS

"God has given me a heart for dance teachers. I know the joys and difficulties they can face. We can encourage each other and pass on helpful information in such a Network."

### NETWORK JOINT COORDINATORS

**Beth Bluett-Spicer | Australia**

[livingdanceinternational@gmail.com](mailto:livingdanceinternational@gmail.com)

**Sue Hodson | South Africa**

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Beth Bluett-Spicer



Sue Hodson



## MOVEMENT IN PRAYER

The ICDF Network for Movement in Prayer aims to share ideas for movement and prayer; for members to support each other in prayer projects; to answer the call for prayer internationally through support in prayer or in person; to celebrate the outcome of prayer; and, where possible, to meet in our countries / localities to move and pray.

### NETWORK COORDINATOR

**Jackie Young | United Kingdom**

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Jackie Young



## DEAF SIGNING

The Deaf Signing Network gives members an opportunity to share their experience of using sign combined with dance and movement in both worship and evangelism.

### NETWORK COORDINATOR

**Linda Wells | United States**

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Linda Wells

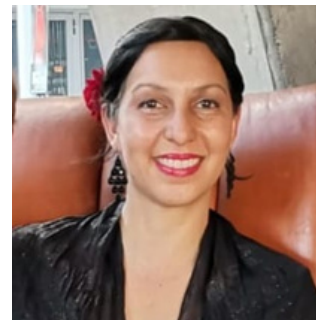




## BALLROOM DANCE

The ballroom network supports ballroom dancers who use ballroom dancing as a form of worship. When ballroom dancing is used in ministry it can be very powerful in depicting God as the leader, and us - His children as the followers.

**NETWORK COORDINATOR**  
**Robin Joseph | South Africa**  
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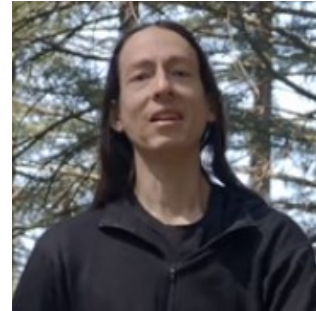
Robin Joseph



## DANCE ARTISTS

This is a network of professional and semi-professional dance artists who are involved in ministry, professional companies, independent dance artists, mission work, or educational roles.

**ICDF**  
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Adam Koen



## MESSIANIC DANCE & TAMBOURINE

This network aims to share ideas and choreography for Messianic Dance and Tambourine. Messianic Dance can also be known as Davidic, Israeli or Hebraic. The title is not as important as the fact that they all have Jewish roots.

**NETWORK JOINT COORDINATORS**  
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**Ralph & Mindy Seta | United States**  
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Vera Chierico



Ralph & Mindy Seta



## DANCE FOR CHILDREN

The Children's Dance Network is for all who are or would like to be involved with teaching and leading children in Christian dance. Through cyberforums we can share ideas, teaching methods, learn from one another's personal experiences in teaching children, share dances, share resources.....and most of all share our hearts.

**NETWORK JOINT COORDINATORS**  
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### WEBSITES :

<https://www.celebrationofdance.com/>

<https://ucgrace.co.uk/about/>



Belma Vardy



Anna Gilderson



## "Releasing Trauma"

"The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners."  
"Isaiah 61:1 and Luke 4:18

I have been pondering the implications of this proclamation by Jesus in Luke 4:18 for us as dance teachers. We are in the unique position of having students under our tutelage who are exposed to the therapeutic benefits of dance as well as learning the joy and discipline of movement. Whether they are serious dancers or just want to be creative and have fun, we are gifting them with more than just a syllabus of steps.

What is the effect of dance on releasing trauma, stress, anxiety, and depression? When one experiences a traumatic event, we automatically go into flight, fight or freeze mode. If we are unable to fight back or flee from a traumatic episode, our trauma gets trapped in our body, in our muscles. After experiencing trauma, we can struggle to find a sense of safety in our bodies. When Jesus said that he had come to bind up the broken-hearted, he was referring to a psychological disconnect or disintegration of body and mind.

Stored trauma within the body results in both physical and psychological symptoms, and most therapies dealing with releasing trauma involve a mainly cognitive approach. What if a reverse approach, namely, releasing trauma tension from the body first, was employed in therapy? The person would be moved from a trauma-induced tense state to a relaxed state. They may then be in a better frame of mind to do the cognitive work required to heal. Through somatic therapies, such as dance, we can engage our body, mind, and spirit in allowing the release of trauma from the body.



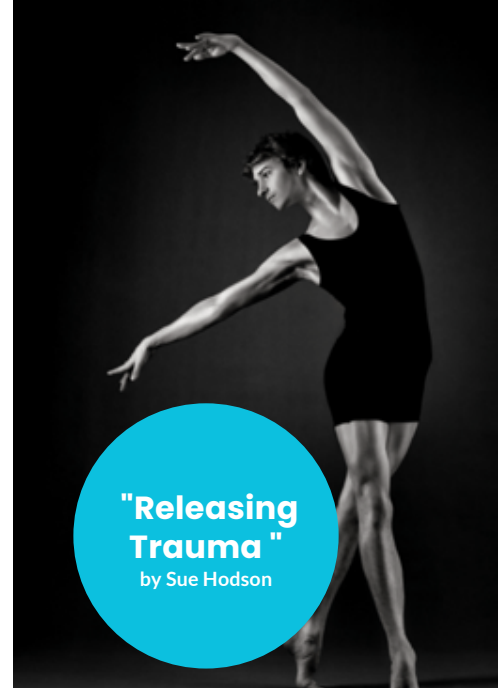
You may have experienced someone bursting into tears during or after a class or workshop. The release of tears can be attributed to the physical release they have just experienced and the work of the Holy Spirit at that moment. In my busyness, I can often forget that the class I have just given could have brought about an opening for Jesus to work in our students.

While investigating how empathy is developed through dance, I came across some research which gave me a lovely revelation for improvisation. As a dance examiner, I have noted how it is often the improv section of the exam, that the dancers struggle with. What if we could develop a freedom within them to see improvisation as a gift and not an exercise to dread? It would be so helpful if we could share with each other what we do to enable improvisation to be a creative and Spirit-led moment. Not all of your students will be Christians, but the very act of improvisation opens them up to understanding other people.

One of my suggestions would be to give them the opportunity to work in pairs to create a movement to music. Don't insist on a particular style or technique. Let them 'play' and see what develops! Imagine how interesting it would be to transform their play into technical moves, without losing the sense of the original improvisation!

Dancers could be encouraged to do the following in their improvisation:

- Observe how the other person is moving and mirror their movements until one of you changes the movement. No discussion is allowed. Just observation.
- Look at moving on different levels, speeds, and shapes to your partner.
- Using props such as fabric, sticks, and ribbons.



## "Releasing Trauma" by Sue Hodson

These exercises, in improvisation, give us the opportunity to acknowledge another's actions, making us feel 'one' with the other when executing different movements.

"Empathy is deeply rooted in the body experience- in the live body- and this experience is what enables us to recognise the others as people like us." (Gallese, 2000)

These are some thoughts I have been having over the past few months. What is the Lord placing on your heart? We would love to hear from you!

Resources for more ideas on Improvisation:

<https://shannondoolingdances.com/2022/07/09/dance-improvisation-for-beginners/>

<https://shannondoolingdances.com/2022/09/16/dance-improvisation-tips-and-activities-for-advanced-dancers/>

We would love to connect more with other dance teachers of different genres, not just ballet and modern.

Sue Hodson: [hodsonsue@gmail.com](mailto:hodsonsue@gmail.com)

Beth Bluett:

[livingdanceinternational@gmail.com](mailto:livingdanceinternational@gmail.com)

## "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me"



Set up of Beth's room for teaching on Zoom.  
Barre on the opposite side of the room

### Zoom - How It Helps Us Communicate by Beth Bluett

After a career as a classical ballet soloist, in France and Belgium, I wrote a ballet curriculum which also expressed Christian life skills in mimes and dances. These are embedded in the ballet curriculum which has grades from 3 years of age to professional level. This has developed into Living Dance International. (LDI) Christian dancers in many countries have now trained in this curriculum and opened their own dance schools. They are able to send their students for examinations and connect with other LDI teachers around the world. Using Zoom in teacher training, ballet and dance examinations, was a learning curve for me. However, now I do in-depth teacher training via Zoom, where I used to travel to different countries to do in-person seminars. No doubt others use it for their communication too. It would be interesting to have feedback about how Zoom has affected other areas of dance.

There are several advantages and disadvantages to using Zoom.

#### The advantages are:

1. Teachers do not have the expense of travel to a seminar. Nor do they have to leave their family and dance school for that period of time. (Though I'm sure some like the break).
2. Students can access the training any time they want and view the recorded seminar.

3. Travel for me to the other side of the world is physically demanding and expensive. My inaccessibility has caused good to come out of the negative of COVID. Teacher trainers and examiners in Living Dance International, have become extremely effective and busy within their own country.

#### The disadvantages are:

1. We do not have personal interaction with the students.
2. Some detailed movements are quite hard to show on camera.
3. Internet dropout and technology problems. (After all, we are dance teachers, not tech experts.)

#### The rundown of how I teach via Zoom

- When teachers express an interest, I email them a registration document. Some teachers receive their initial training this way, current teachers do it as professional development or receive training in a higher grade. The interesting part is working out the time zones and which country has daylight saving.
- My preparation is on myself, my camera, my room and the laptop videos I want to screenshare.
- Myself: Plan a 'good hair day.' Wear semi-fitting clothes that can show my movements in a contrasting colour to the background wall, and put on television make-up i.e. not as heavy as stage make-up.
- My cameras: I have a second camera set up on a tripod for a view of the room. This second camera is used to demonstrate a movement.

I do a test Zoom meeting to check if this second camera captures my whole body, from toes to arms held high in the 5th position. I adjust the camera accordingly.

- My Room: On this test Zoom, I pull the curtains, so the lighting is suitable. I had extra camera lights, but I ended up not using them. They showed too many wrinkles! I check the room, so it does not look cluttered, then test the laptop camera and adjust it slightly so it shows just my head and shoulders. When all seems as good as it can be, in this home situation, I then prepare the laptop.

- My Laptop: I need to load the video of the grade and open the PowerPoint of the online training. They both open before I commence the actual meeting.

There are options on Zoom to check the sound levels and once I have the sound about right, I have reached the limit of my technical know-how and leave the rest to Zoom.

I haven't yet mastered how to send the link to the meeting the day before so about 30 minutes before the actual start time for teachers I turn my phone to 'hotspot' and open Zoom. From there I open a 'New Meeting'. I then 'Invite' teachers who have registered for the Online Training Zoom. They receive a link via email and on clicking it they join my 'Meeting'. As teachers click their link, it appears on my screen that they are in the 'Waiting Room'. I press 'Admit' then they appear on my screen. We greet each other and can chat online until all are present, and the meeting can start.



1. I record it so teachers who cannot attend can access the recording.
2. At certain intervals, I pause for questions from teachers but turn off the recording during this time. I must ask them to 'unmute' if they are on 'Mute' otherwise we cannot hear them.
3. At the end of the meeting (often 2 hours) I turn off 'Recording'. After the farewells, I press 'Close Meeting'. Then it is important to leave the laptop on because the recording gets automatically sent to the laptop. (I select this option rather than save on 'the cloud' at the beginning of the recording).
4. A two-hour meeting takes quite a while to load into a folder on a laptop. On my laptop, it is called 'Zoom meeting for Beth Bluett 24th Nov 2023' for example. I then rename it.
5. I then save it onto several USBs to post to teachers who registered but missed the meeting. I have decided to post an actual USB to teachers in Australia and New Zealand. I am still trying to find the most reliable way to send it to teachers in South Africa, Scotland and other countries because the file is huge and Google Drive and WeTransfer have been a bit unreliable lately.
6. There is still a lot more to learn. I cannot for instance monitor the 'Chat Room' while I am presenting. Sometimes a teacher sends a message on the Chat Room that I have forgotten to switch cameras!! Oh dear! Ballet training wasn't complicated enough without having to be concerned with all this technology!

HAPPY ZOOMING!

[Dance Resource](#)

["Using Your Phone to Record a Dance Instruction Video"](#)



Beth at Joanna Elphinstone dance physio in Switzerland

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**Jackie Young**



God's choice is not necessarily the person whom we would expect





# DEAF SIGNING

“With sign, I always come back to how expressive it is, how emphatic and emotive it can be.”



Naomi Haywood

## Full of Possibilities

One of the greatest things about sign language is all the possibilities it provides. Its use is not limited to the communication of deaf individuals but includes using sign like Makaton to allow communication from young pre-verbal children to non-verbal/disabled children and adults. It enables visual learning, self-expression and, consequently, the self-determination that communication generates. On a personal level, as someone who experiences verbal shutdowns, I cannot overstate the value of it. In my opinion, signing is powerful because it is so expressive. Facial expressions are a key part of the language and the whole body is utilised in communication. It is individual since everyone's body and face are different, and so every sign is subtly personal; yet, at its core, it connects people.

Sign language has always been a part of my life, even when I didn't notice it, as my mother knew some signs from years before I was born. However, my first true interest in sign began when a group of deaf Christians began attending my home church, bringing with them some interpreters to translate.

Even though it was ten years ago now, I remember sitting as close to them as I dared so I could watch their hands moving. I don't know the circumstances for why this group arrived at my church. They moved elsewhere several years later, but the signing I witnessed at that time sparked an interest that would never leave me.

Fortunately, I was not the only one who was interested and a beginner's course in British Sign Language (BSL) was arranged, one evening a week for about a term, held at the church. The end result, after several formal exams and a lot of hard work, was a proper qualification, complete with a certificate. Not long after finishing that course, I made my first attempt at teaching BSL. I got permission from my secondary school to run an introduction course of my own, for other pupils, during weekly lunch breaks.

With the help of some friends and a kind teacher who allowed us to use her classroom, I planned lessons and created (what would be the first of many versions) an introductory booklet with depictions of BSL signs. There were maybe a dozen students, including myself and the friends who helped me organise it, but we had fun and several even learned some things.

Some years later, for my A-Level personal research essay, I wrote about the merits of teaching BSL in UK schools. At the time, this was an ongoing debate, which has now moved forward a step with the launch of a BSL GCSE, to be taught in schools. For this essay, I created the second iteration of my BSL booklet, updating the bright graphics that pleased 13-year-old attention spans, and adding more information.

It included an overview of polite customs in deaf culture and explanations of how/why British Sign Language differs from English or American Sign Language. This booklet has remained my foundation for introducing sign language to new people; and during COVID, less than two years later, it received another update. It may get another, only time will tell.

My first proper interaction with sign was at church, and I was aware of the potential for its use in that environment.

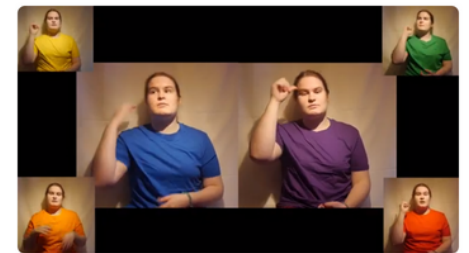
I'm not sure at which point I began using sign in worship; to me, signing the lyrics seems to add a level of expression that singing alone cannot match. It's hard to convey without experiencing it... Whenever I'm in sung worship, I must choose between raising a flag or my hands to sign. Several times I have stood at the front and signed for my congregation, purely in an interpretive capacity, not as a translator.

My signed worship is more about the feeling of words and is closer to dance than speaking. With sign, I always come back to how expressive it is, how emphatic and emotive it can be. More recently, I have been exploring integrating signs into dance pieces, such as the performance my family choreographed for ICDF Britain's National Conference in September 2023.

<https://youtu.be/70E7U5lsV3E?si=26nb2Fm00Lljz6aN>

My latest project is one I'm pretty proud of, and it is a full BSL performance piece unlike anything I'd tried before, to a mash-up of Awesome God and God Only Knows

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ADFzzX5MMs>



I've been a member of ICDF Britain pretty much since I was born and my mother, Jacqueline Haywood, has been running workshops for our local region for almost as long as I can remember. It was during the COVID lockdown that I first led a workshop on signed songs. Since signing can be done sitting down, it was ideal for teaching over Zoom. My first workshop was a huge success if it's not too bold to say so.

My approach is straightforward and has rarely varied since then. I aim to be flexible in my workshops and allow as much repetition of a sign, line, or verse/chorus as is needed by the group, which can mean one or two songs might be taught in an hour.

# DEAF SIGNING

Within my workshops, I include some basics of placement and BSL grammar and I like to share the origin/meaning of certain signs, which I find fascinating. I also discuss the process of translation from English to BSL; as many English words have no direct alternative, is not always simple. In my experience though, I find translating anything into a sign makes me think about the meaning of the words.

When I'm planning a signing workshop, I find two websites extremely useful:

1. Sign Dictionary  
<https://www.signbsl.com/>

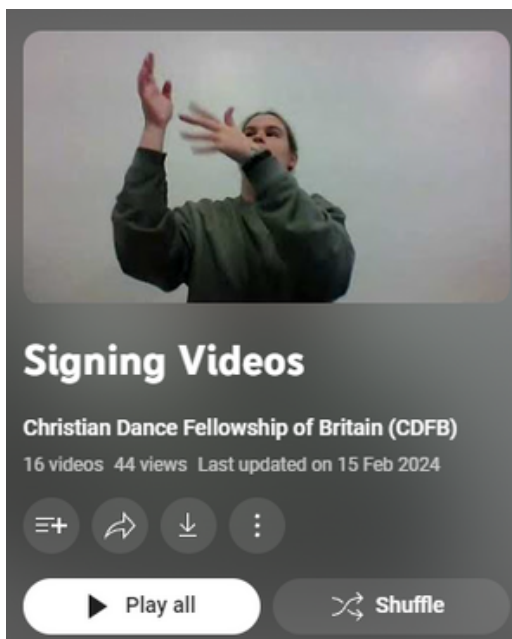


2. Christian BSL for Christian-specific signs.  
<https://christianbsl.com/>



For every worship song I have taught in a workshop, online or in-person, I have recorded a video of me signing. These videos are now all available on ICDF Britain's YouTube channel in a dedicated playlist.

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLDzXlWrUEh-pyYkvxIWGARCrHN98CzBPI>





# BALLROOM DANCE



Robin Joseph

## Introducing Robin Joseph our new Ballroom Network Leader

The Ballroom Network supports dancers who use ballroom dancing as a form of worship and will focus on the sharing of ideas, music and choreography tips. Ballroom dancers, be they individuals, couples or dance groups, will be encouraged to share what they doing in their areas. When ballroom dancing is used in ministry, it can be very powerful in depicting God as the leader, and us – His children as the followers. Through ballroom dancing, we have lovely imagery of God directing and leading our lives as we follow in accordance with His will. The network can also share ideas on how to use ballroom dance choreography and apply it to solo group dancing on occasions when no partners are available. If you are interested in joining the network, please email me at [robinemmanuel@yahoo.com](mailto:robinemmanuel@yahoo.com) Please share what you or your dance group has been doing with ballroom dance.



### Following God's Lead

At the ICDF Conference held in Sweden in 2022, Peter Hothersall led a wonderful workshop on using patterns in ballroom dancing. The idea was to learn how to easily transition from one pattern to another. The patterns and shapes are used in formation dance but can also be applied when dancing solo. An example of some patterns that Peter taught was how to transition from dancers standing in a diagonal line to making a star shape. After the workshop, there was some time for fun, with Peter and I taking the floor for an impromptu quickstep.

Watch the video.

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/vfzkPEPSz7Y>

In March 2023, ICDF South Africa held a Ballroom Praise workshop in Cape Town. It was a Tango workshop which focussed on lead and follow. The main theme of the workshop was how God leads us and our response to Him. Topics of discussion included resisting God's direction and trying to lead our own lives.



Delegates at the ICDF South Africa National Conference held in July 2023 took part in a Salsa Praise community dance. This solo Latin dance gave praise and honour to God and was danced to the song I Can Only Imagine. The delegates enjoyed the upbeat salsa music and many were introduced to a new dance genre.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-s7ozfGgxE>

# BALLROOM DANCE

## The Benefits of Ballroom Dance

We all know that dancing is beneficial to our health and well-being, but are there any benefits specific to ballroom dancing? Ballroom dancing is not only a great cardiovascular exercise but also beneficial for muscle toning and strengthening your core. Doctors from the University of Brighton have suggested that a 30-minute swing dance class is more beneficial for weight loss for seniors than spending 30 minutes in the gym.

Ballroom dances such as Waltz, Tango, Slow Foxtrot and Quickstep require large sweeping steps. These leg extensions improve flexibility and range of motion. Ballroom dancing is excellent for improving your posture. Let's not forget the added benefit of having a toned back and arms, which is a natural result of holding a proper ballroom frame.

The Latin dances are particularly advantageous for toning the legs and improving muscle definition. The long leg lines created by pointing the feet, as well as the wearing of heels, contribute to the toning of the calves and quadriceps. Besides the physical benefits of ballroom dancing, there is also an array of mental, social and emotional benefits. These include improved self-esteem, confidence, cognitive function, better social skills, emotional well-being, stress relief, improved mood, joy and happiness.

At the dance studio where I previously worked, it was wonderful to see the improvement in my students in these areas. One couple was blessed to spend quality time together as the wife was fatally ill with cancer. One of my students was a powerful businesswoman running a company, and it was wonderful to see her and her husband thrive as she relinquished some of that power and control to him and allowed him to lead her on the dance floor. Another student was socially awkward, and it brought me such joy to see him smile for the first time after he had been dancing for a few months.

As Christians, it is our chance to shine that light of love and care, whether while teaching or being a friend to someone on the dance floor who is shy. I am most excited about the various research studies around improved cognitive function and how ballroom dancing reduces the risk of dementia.

A study published in the Journal of Aging and Physical Activity involved a comparative study between two groups of older adults.

One group completed six months of social ballroom dancing, while the second group completed six months of treadmill walking.

Ballroom dancing improved the processing speed of information, as well as reduced brain atrophy in the region responsible for memory function. This area of the brain (the hippocampus) is usually affected by Alzheimer's disease.

But how exactly does ballroom dancing do this? Researchers from the Albert Einstein College of Medicine studied people over the age of 75 for twenty-one years and have found that frequent ballroom dancing reduced the risk of Alzheimer's disease by 76% outperforming crossword puzzles, biking, swimming, walking, golf and reading.

The key is the speedy decision-making required by ballroom dancing. This quick thinking is required by both the leader and the follower. For example, sometimes the leader must quickly decide to take another step to avoid crashing into another couple. The follower must quickly interpret the lead and decide what step is required. New neural pathways need to be created, which are achieved by split-second decision-making on the dance floor. The varied movements, patterns and sequences in ballroom dancing allow the brain to rewire, adapt and form new connections which improves memory retention and cognitive function and assists in the prevention of dementia.

So, whether it's the elegant Waltz, dramatic Tango, cheeky Cha Cha or the joyous salsa that takes your fancy, keep hitting the social dance floor to reap all the benefits that ballroom dancing provides.

**Robin Joseph**

**“ Ballroom dancing reduced the risk of Alzheimer's disease by 76% outperforming crossword puzzles, biking, swimming, walking, golf and reading”.**





# DANCE ARTISTS



Adam Koen

Adam Koen is a Butoh Dance Artist. He's been in the dance field for twelve years, endlessly travelling, and constantly searching for how to take his dance to a deeper place. In this search, he's come full circle, back to the faith familiar to his growing up, realizing that all along, what he'd been searching for was always in his backyard, hidden in plain sight.

Adam says, "There was depth, Spirit, love, soul—things I know deep down inside everybody is seeking in their own way".

Christ's Passion was the greatest performance of all time. No act of love could ever come close to what God did for our sake. Love, then, is the underlying message of the gospels—that we love God with all our heart, soul and mind, and do the same with each other. This is depth, the milk and honey that gives anything true meaning in the first place.

## A Christian Butoh?

This depth and search for something greater is what Butoh dance has in common with sincere Christianity. Butoh has always had the reputation of being "something more" or "liminal." Of my twelve years of exposure to various genres of dance or movement—modern, ballet, jazz, contact, etc.—the genre that has by far captured the most depth for me, physically, mentally and beyond, has been Butoh. Though Christianity is generally not associated with Butoh, the co-creator himself—Kazuo Ohno—was someone who embodied the Christian faith. This is precisely why, I feel, he left such a deep impression in the performance world because he lived the Spirit and those around him felt it.



Kazuo Ohno

Likely unbeknownst to many Butoh artists, Kazuo Ohno's first performance outside of Japan in 1980 took place in Nancy, France at the Church of St. Fiacre where he performed "An Invitation to Jesus". Then, two weeks later, he would perform the same piece in Paris at Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas Church (Ohno).

Yoshito, Kazuo Ohno's son, explained that Kazuo practised his Christianity in Butoh. Expressions such as "God is great" or "Thank you" were not verbalized but instead conveyed through his dance (Ohno, Y 23).

Yoshito once asked Kazuo to show him how being a Christian was related to being a Butoh artist. Kazuo responded that he would embark on a pilgrimage to Bethlehem, considering it a return to his spiritual birthplace, "as if Christ is walking" (Nakamura interview). The pilgrimage culminated in The Dead Sea in 1985, where both Kazuo and Yoshito took part. Although Tatsumi Hijikata (the other Butoh co-founder) choreographed Yoshito's dance in this performance, it was Kazuo whom Hijikata commented on after the show, saying, "Finally, a spiritual Butoh dancer came to us" (Fraleigh 67).

Tatsumi Hijikata, the other co-founder of Butoh, infused the dance form with its darker undertones, which has a reputation for making people feel uncomfortable. He frequently criticized Kazuo for his belief in God. Yet, in a surprising revelation at Hijikata's deathbed, to the astonishment of Yoshito, Tatsumi confessed that his ultimate fear was God, and his parting words were: "In my last moments, God's light ..." (Ohno, K & O 137).

## Enter Theokinesis

Theokinesis takes off where Hijikata left off—with God.

Theokinesis (θεόκινησις) is a Christian movement practice that welcomes participants of all backgrounds and abilities to engage in sacred and creative dance theatre. In Greek, "theo" means God and "kinesis" means movement. The practice grew from a desire to create a new chapter in the world of Butoh dance theatre, where a powerful Christian-based sacred dance could occur.

Through Theokinesis, the body becomes a vessel guided by God. Witnesses surrender themselves to a dance of praise and worship. The practice nurtures the creative flow for spontaneous expression and presentation.

Theokinesis draws inspiration from the entirety of Christian history, encompassing saints, Christian mystics, and the early desert fathers.

October 2023 was when this pedagogical and performative project began. The website, [theokinesis.com](https://theokinesis.com), is a free Creative Commons resource designed for dance ministers, theatre practitioners, contemporary dancers, and experimental body researchers seeking inspiration.

Theokinesis uses Butoh much like a modern church uses a guitar. Just as a guitar is neutral on its own, Butoh is being imbued with a Christian purpose.

## A Living Sacrifice

The first Theokinesis performance entitled "A Living Sacrifice," occurred in Chennai, India on the 25th of January, 2024. The performance was inspired by the passage in Romans 12:1, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship." Because "A Living Sacrifice" is a direct reflection of the three months spent developing the Theokinesis pedagogy, it serves as a practical illustration of how to apply this methodology in a performance setting.

### A Future With God

In harmony with God's plan, Theokinesis will go where it needs to go. I am but a dancing vessel, after all.

I end with a quote from the dance minister Marlita Hill, highlighting my responsibility as a dance minister of Theokinesis:

We till the heart as we lead the people in praise and worship, as we lead them in gratitude toward God, and as we lead them in remembrance of who God is to them and for them, and what He has done in them and for them. (Hill 62)

Website: <https://theokinesis.com>

Performance of "A Living Sacrifice":

[https://youtu.be/\\_EaIVsnG\\_7Y](https://youtu.be/_EaIVsnG_7Y)

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## Theokinesis, A Christian Butoh Dance Adam Koan

Photographs by Richard Dvořák of the Theokinesis performance A Living Sacrifice performed by Adam Koan



Swan Alyon, who did the chanting is shown in this picture

Performance of  
“A Living Sacrifice”

[https://youtu.be/\\_Ea1](https://youtu.be/_Ea1VsnG_7Y)  
[VsnG\\_7Y](https://youtu.be/_Ea1VsnG_7Y)

# MESSIANIC DANCE & TAMBOURINES



Ralph & Mindy Seta

## Blessings to you in Messiah Yeshua

We hope this correspondence and update finds you well. Much has happened in the past year. Last February 2023, we led a tour to Israel to dance healing throughout the land and minister together with the Believers there. It was quite powerful. Some people we ministered with included Shilo Ben Hod, Carolyn Hyde, and Joshua Aaron.

Mindy completed her studies and received her doctorate in Community Care and Counselling with a focus on trauma. She did groundbreaking work and conducted the first study on Messianic dance. The data showed a positive correlation to relief from self-reported symptoms of depression. Amazingly, she also received her license after completing a college course in Israel as an Israeli dance instructor. We went out on the road for our last tour in the Pacific Northwest United States. It was wonderful to introduce many nostalgic dances at the workshops, and for attendees to connect with Israel in this dynamic way.

Currently, we are on our way to Israel once again. We, along with thirteen other dancers, are going to serve, pray, worship through dance, and stand with the Apple of God's Eye for a time such as this. One event we will be doing is a Royalty Banquet for Holocaust Survivors and IDF Lone Soldiers. This beautiful event will be in coordination with the Abundant Bread of Salvation. It will include a beautiful meal before Erev Shabbat at a restaurant overlooking the Mediterranean Sea and a hundred shekel gift cards for all the attendees.

Many there are happy that we are coming to worship and stand together with them shoulder to shoulder. We must consider what people have gone through and continue to go through. We will be gathering at Hostage Square in Tel Aviv with those who were impacted by the massacre.

**Ralph and Dr. Mindy Seta**



Vera Chierico

Vera writes that after 38 years of being involved, learning, presenting, choreographing and teaching what was initially called Davidic Dance, she believes that she has learnt one or two things that would be good to share with those who are still learning or are already teaching this dance style.

The roots of the steps are from Israeli dance, and over the years the name has changed to Messianic Dance, which can be confusing. Having done many studies of dance/steps in the Bible (for which I have a list) I prefer it to be called Biblical Dance Worship.

It all started in 1985 when I was invited to join a dance worship group in New York who were with Jews for Jesus, called Dancers of the New Jerusalem. When I was called to this ministry, I felt ill-equipped and felt I did not know enough. I'm a classically trained R.A.D. dancer having done many styles in my years of professional work, contemporary, jazz, ethnic, cultural, Afro Cuban, ballroom but never Hebraic.

When I moved to the UK with my young family, I did not expect to be dancing anymore, but my UK New Jerusalem Dancers just 'happened' with no effort or desire from me. Suddenly I was asked to present NJD concerts and teach communal dance worship at events all over the UK and I didn't even know the most famous of Hebraic circle dances, a Hora!

The Messiah Conference is a huge event of thousands of Jewish and Gentile believers who gathered in Harrisburg, USA to worship and learn together. I attended this excellent conference for the first time in 1993 and did not know that when the worship songs began so many people, maybe 100 or more, men and women of all ages, and children ran to the huge space in front of the stage and joined in the dances, led by several chosen dancers. I noticed they used specific steps, which I picked up immediately, which were repeated throughout the dance.

About four or five dance workshops were held at the same time and because I was hungry to learn everything, I went discretely from room to room, notepad in hand, learning the names of steps and devising my own method of notation for the dances. As soon as I had the whole dance written down, I went to the next room. All afternoon! All week.

There wasn't a lot of order or control in the evening dance sessions, and if you were next to the wrong person, you could be knocked over or stepped on. Therefore, when I returned to my workshops in the UK, I arranged two separate circles, beginners and advanced, and I trained my dancers to lead a simpler version of each dance I had learned. I led in the advanced circles.

Often there was not enough space for two separate circles, so I had concentric circles with the beginners in the centre. The reason for that is a beginner will naturally look at other dancers in front of them and get confused as to what they should do, no matter how many times I said 'Don't look at the dancer in front of you' Another helpful hint is to get a knowledgeable dancer directly across the circle to help demonstrate that they should 'copy', not 'mirror' your steps. Learning to give 'advanced cueing' is very helpful. That means giving the name of the step and direction one or two counts before you do them. Not everyone can do that easily, but it can be learnt.

I learnt the Hora, Mayim, Tcherkessia and many other steps from those more experienced dance teachers at the Messiah conference. They had taught the 'interchangeable' dance system which I find better than the 'song specific' dances because it meant that everyone could join in and quickly learn the few steps instead of standing out because they did not know that song or dance. It also meant that no matter what the speed or rhythm is, there is a dance you can lead.

I had a few overseas invitations to go alone to teach and lead. Twice in Hungary and once in Holland and to take NJD to Kyiv to dance in the Hear O Israel Jewish Festival. I did not know that the mostly Jewish audience in the Kyiv theatre would be invited by Jonathan Bernis to go to the front to dance and that I would have to lead hundreds of total strangers, including children and holocaust survivors, in a communal circle dance.



# MESSIANIC DANCE & TAMBOURINES

We immediately separated the small children and danced with them to one side and the adults formed concentric circles and mostly just stuck to a Hora or Mayim. It was good training for me with about 100 or more people who did not speak English all running happily to the front to embrace their Jewish culture, rather than hide it, under Communism, and I had to keep order and safety. All the time I was learning what works well and what doesn't!

In 1998, I attended a festival in Budapest and when the music began, many people would come to the dance area and I'd have to lead them. I had no control over what shoes they wore or who danced next to whom. The women would take their shoes off and the men would wear solid, heavy outdoor shoes. As a qualified Fitness Instructor, I could see the dangers and soon one man went in the wrong direction and stepped on the toes of a female translator who hobbled off in pain. She did not join the dance worship at any other time in the festival and to me, it was a victory for the enemy. With 200 people there, I wasn't able to prevent this, and I learnt yet another thing about dance etiquette.

One other thing I like to prevent during the worship is disruptive laughing. It's normal for beginners to make mistakes and generally, it embarrasses them and they laugh. This happens in every country in which I have taught. The last thing they want is attention, but laughing sadly causes the attention to go directly to them and away from the LORD. In my opening chat, I always tell my attendees to just try to ignore any mistakes they might make, because it bothers neither me nor the LORD and we want to just keep worshipping and not be distracted.

I've developed arthritis in my hand joints, and I've noticed that some people will grip your hands too tight. So, it's good to mention that and demonstrate a gentle way to simply touch fingertips rather than a tight painful grip. Do not put the weight of your arms on the person next to you, but maintain your own weight. Also, by bending your arms, you can dance a little closer. When your arms are straight and you're a distance apart, it could bother those with shoulder issues.

I always try to use what I call an 'open circle'. Before I did, it this way, I was often told 'I would have joined in but I didn't want to break your circle'. An open circle is all holding hands except the teacher/leader and the last person in the circle. This open space is an invitation to others to join the worship dance.

Another thing to avoid is changing the dance or choreography mid-dance. Many people in my dance circles close their eyes, get into the scriptural words of the music or the dance and enter deeper into the worship. The last thing you want to do is disrupt these beautiful moments by changing the dance.

At the beginning of my workshops, I always give a little 'dance etiquette' talk based on my 38 years of experience to make things work smoothly and efficiently.

1. The dance style I teach is worship and has its roots in the Bible and the worship of Israel towards the G-d of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
2. We mostly hold hands and dance in a circle, which makes it Biblical. Psalm 30 in the original Tenakh uses the word Macowl, which means 'dance a round dance'. I like to leave a space in the circle for latecomers to join in without breaking into a closed circle. I call it an 'open circle'.
3. Most of my dances are interchangeable, which means you can use them to any music of the same speed and rhythm. You learn a few simple steps and repeat them until the end, and you can focus more easily on the scripture in the song and less on what your feet are doing.
4. Everyone makes mistakes, even your teacher! It's normal to be embarrassed and laugh which brings more attention to you which you don't want! Also, don't stop since it affects the flow of the circle. Therefore, just ignore your mistake and keep going so the attention stays on the LORD and the worship.
5. Maintain the weight of your own arm and don't put the weight on your neighbour's arms who could have shoulder injuries. Keep your arms bent so that you have leverage and don't end up pulling your neighbour's arms at the shoulder. Don't grip too tightly, you might dance next to someone with arthritic finger joints.

My mantra is the KISS theory.  
Keep It Simple Sweetie.

It is better to keep doing the same thing over and over 'decently and in order' than to teach something more difficult and make a mess!

## "Vera's 5 Dance Etiquette Tips"



# DANCE FOR CHILDREN



Anna Gilderson

## Creating a Multiage Worship Dance for Easter

One of the great things about teaching Christian dance and movement is the opportunity to work with an array of people from different backgrounds and walks of life. Easter 2023 offered the chance to draw together a multi-age group to create a worship dance for Easter Sunday. Apart from the opportunity to communicate the word of God through movement, it's also a great chance to help others experience a different way of worship and deepen their relationship with God. A dance was done to the song 'Great Things' by Phil Wickham and can viewed here: [https://youtu.be/FekbExrYU\\_0](https://youtu.be/FekbExrYU_0)

Here are 3 things that I find important:

### 1. **Adapting movements—ages and abilities**

When dealing with a multi-age dance group, it's important to isolate and recognise the needs and abilities of the individuals that you are working with. This could encompass additional or sensory needs, physical or visual impairments, and age-related abilities. Regarding the group that I was working with, the main needs were age, the youngest was five and the oldest was in their thirties, quite an age span! Some had also danced before, and others hadn't. When creating movements, I work on the 3-level principle. The middle level is average, and most will be able to do it. The lower level is simplified and the upper level is more advanced. Here's an example:

- Middle level – whilst waving a flag, step forward R, step dig in L foot, step backwards L, step dig in L foot
- Lower level – march on the spot and wave the flag above
- Upper level – step forward onto R foot, hop. Step backwards, L, R. Step forward onto L foot, hop. Step backwards, R, L – whilst waving the flag above the head

### 2. **Ownership and movement development**

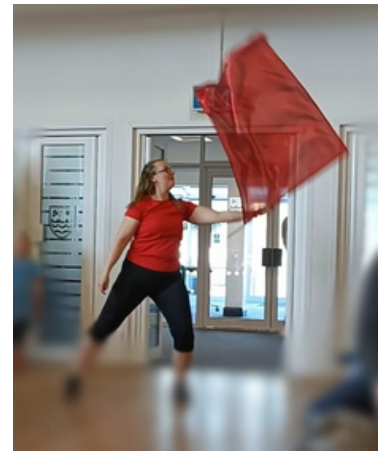
Within any dance I choreograph, I offer the chance for joint choreography allowing those participating to contribute to the dance. In the case of this dance, I had two youth dancers whom I had worked with previously who were very keen to create something themselves. I offered them a verse and left them to it. As a choreographer and teacher, this takes trust, but in doing this, it offers ownership to those taking part in the dance. Within this context, it may also be suitable to provide completely different movements to those more able rather than simply changing the level which I spoke of earlier.

### 3. **Rehearsal reflections**

Regardless of age, for me, it's important that right from the beginning we take a moment at the beginning of each session to talk about why we are doing what we are doing, what the Bible says and what God might be speaking to us and through us as we dance and worship. Younger ones might not always be able to enter into the conversations, but they are exposed to what we are talking about and begin to recognise and understand the power that moving and dancing can have.

These opportunities that come my way to incorporate all ages into a deeper understanding of worship are treasured. There are encouraging conversations as they share what God is saying to them, insights into how they learn, and the way people see children and adults moving together. As a choreographer, it wasn't the easiest dance to complete due to changing numbers and rehearsal clashes. But God works all things together for good and it was lovely to witness to the congregation on Easter Sunday.

**Anna Gilderson**



Great Things –  
Multi age Worship Dance

[https://youtu.be/FekbExrYU\\_0](https://youtu.be/FekbExrYU_0)





# DANCE FOR CHILDREN

## Stories from Members

Anna spoke to two members who have worked with children in some context over the past year. Here are their experiences.



Lizzie Morley



Helen Warren

### 1. What was the setting where you worked with children?

Church

### 2. Was it with a specific age range?

Primary aged children

### 3. What was the aim?

To deliver a workshop

### 4. How did you connect the Christian faith to the movement you were sharing?

We were using dance and movement to explore the story of Jonah.

### 5. What did you observe as the children moved and worshipped?

Children enjoyed using parachutes to create 'storm waves'; strips of crepe paper to dance the sea (when Jonah was thrown overboard into the sea) and flags for the plant Jonah rested underneath. These resources helped children explore movements.

### 6. Any nuggets, testimonies, etc. that you'd like to share?

Lots of children in the church (primary aged group) had special needs—one little boy has autism and struggles to engage in church group learning activities. However, this workshop was made for him. His smile and enthusiasm were encouraging. He lay on the parachute, enjoying the feel of the waves and during the dance with streamers and flags, he got hold of my hands and jumped up and down with enthusiasm.

### 1. What was the setting where you worked with children?

Community outreach holiday workshop working with a place called Sime Gallery

### 2. Was it with a specific age range?

Primary school-age kids, four to eleven years of age

### 3. What was the aim? (Workshop, performance, community outreach)

Community outreach, as part of the cultural programme at the Sime Gallery. Sidney Sime was a famous local artist. One of his paintings is about a ship out at sea in a storm. This was the theme of the workshop "Treasure Island". I was asked to do an interactive drama/movement workshop, which could lead to a performance on the stage at the end of the afternoon.

### 4. How did you connect the Christian faith to the movement you were sharing?

Even though most of the adult leader volunteers & organisers are from my church, this was not specifically a church event. So, this was a secular activity. This meant that pastorally, I was able to nurture and encourage children to enjoy expressive arts and give them fun new opportunities. Also, as a Christian, I enjoy community activities. And I wanted to help support members of my church congregation who were organising the event.

### 5. What did you observe as the children moved and worshipped?

The children really enjoyed it. They led lots of the ideas, which were great. They chose which characters they wanted to be, and they danced together really nicely as a group. They particularly enjoyed the characterisation.

We had fun creating the sea, using lots of blue scarves etc. on the floor, to set the scene, for being on our pirate ship on a stormy sea.

During the chorus, we used movement and materials to create the waves of the sea, by all forming a circle, taking hold of a large blue bedsheet, and waving it up and down (a bit like kid's parachute games!)

### 6. Any nuggets, testimonies, etc. that you'd like to share?

All the children who had practised with me during the workshop were happy and confident to perform on stage, and nobody was too nervous, which was lovely. Other children also came up onto the stage to join in too, whilst they were watching, even if they hadn't been part of our rehearsal workshop all were welcome. So it was wonderful to include even more children at the end, too.



# DANCE FOR CHILDREN



Belma Vardy

## God works through everything by Belma Vardy

Let me give a little background before I go into this story. I was travelling home from one of my ministry trips from a village in the far north of Quebec in Canada called Kangiqsujuaq. I had been there teaching a two-week children's dance camp to Indigenous Inuit children. I had just landed in Kuujjuq and missed my connecting flight, having now to wait till the next day to fly out. I imagined having a whole day to rest, relax, and read my Bible. Wonderful! This would be a great layover after all! I was enjoying dinner when an Inuit woman came into the restaurant, noticed me and said, "I know you!" I recognized her too. A number of years ago, she and a group of Inuit women attended one of my sessions at Singing Waters Christian Retreat Center near Orangeville, Ontario. A Christian up here! Wonderful!" she exclaimed.

The next morning at breakfast, there she was again. We were excited to connect with each other. "I want to show you my town," she announced. I realized the Lord had other plans for me than relaxing, so I agreed. I had noticed many people going into a building down the street and asked my newly appointed tour guide what was happening there. "It's a government building", she said. "I work there. The crowd is there to see Cirque de Soleil." People further north had mentioned Cirque de Soleil, and some were auditioning their children. Cirque de Soleil trained them and took the good ones as performers. When I heard about this, I mentioned I would love to train in one of their workshops, and hoped for some pointers on teaching kids. We entered the building and my friend told the receptionist that I wanted to participate in a workshop. The girl summoned the ringmaster. "I hear you teach dance," he said. Can you teach a workshop for us this morning?" I quickly corrected him. "Oh no! I just want to sit in one and watch how you teach!" "No way!" he insisted. "We want you to teach!"

I had fifteen minutes to prepare. I rushed to the apartment where I had stayed, rummaged through my stuff, found some music, and hurried back to Cirque de Soleil. I breathed silently, I need a Word from You Lord! I had no idea what music I should use or what I should teach, and I needed to hear from God.

They gave me a group of little boys, ages eight, nine, and ten. To find their level of creativity, I assigned a partner to each boy and asked them to make a statue of their partner that expressed their culture or beliefs. "I'm non-Indigenous," I explained. "I want to learn about you and your culture."

The first little boy shared that his partner was holding a big bucket full of the blood of Jesus. Jesus had said that there was enough blood in the bucket to pour out upon everyone in the room, and He wanted to pour it out on them. His response took away my breath. I felt this was God's confirmation to me that I was in the right place at the right time. I taught the group many songs, and they particularly liked the lively tune "Pharoah Pharoah." The ringmaster decided this would be the song they would use in their full presentation.

"Before we learn the song, we need to know what it means, where it comes from and why we're doing it," he told the kids. Turning to me he asked, "Could you please tell me what Pharoah Pharoah is about?"

"It's from the Bible," I explained. "For you to understand it, I have to read the Bible story."

"Great! Everybody sit down," ordered the ringmaster. "We're going to hear a story." All the teachers from Cirque de Soleil sat down as well to listen.

There I was, reading the Bible to Cirque de Soleil. Originally, I was to teach one workshop, but it became three, four, and then five. They practised the song with gusto: "Ooo, ooo--- let my people go ... Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah."

I eventually learned that "Pharoah, Pharoah" became part of Cirque de Soleil's repertoire for years to come.

**Belma Vardy**

## So Remember...

"Be ready in season and out of season" and be flexible and ready at any time to step into God's mysterious and magnificent plans. Knowing He loves each child and wants the best for each child, we need to learn to trust Him when our plans get thwarted and get turned around from what we thought was supposed to happen.

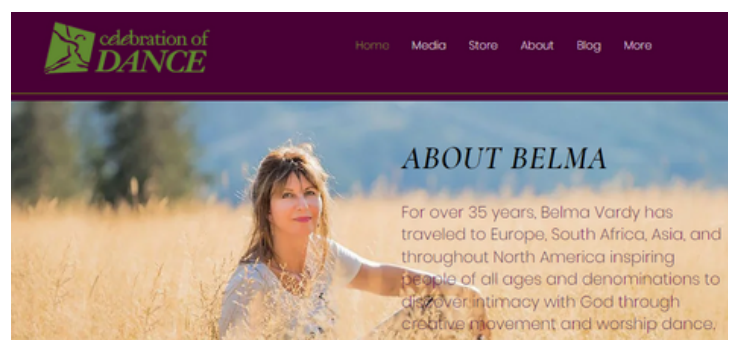
Let go and let God, which is what we have to do to release every child into His Hands. When we do that, we can stand back and watch God at work through each and every child He created, made in the image of God, and valued highly by the Creator.

Every blessing,  
**Anna and Belma**

**"Be ready  
in season  
and out of  
season"**

Visit Belma's website  
for more stories

<https://www.celebrationofdance.com/>



# ICDF RESOURCES

## CONNECT WITH US CLICK ON ICON TO NAVIGATE TO PLATFORM



Our ICDF Website contains all the information on our Fellowship. Contact us and we will link you with the resource you require.



Our Networks create a space where discussions and activities can be shared with like minded individuals. Join a Network and learn more about your dance interest



We have an Official Facebook page for the public and a Group page for our members and supporters to interact with each other.



Medina Potter manages our X Page. We don't do many Tweets on ICDF, but we could start tweeting about our upcoming ICDF Dance Week from 12 - 19 May. Let's celebrate Pentecost together and spread the word



We would love to get more pictures and reels for our Instagram page. Connect with Medina to share your pictures on our ICDF Instagram



Do you have anything you would like to market on our Pinterest Page. Email [icdfworld@gmail.com](mailto:icdfworld@gmail.com) and we will share your dance products.



We have ICDF branded products waiting for you to purchase. Go our our ICDF shop and place your order today!!



Share your dance videos with us and we will post them on our Youtube channel.



Join our Telegram Global ICDF page and see our Newsflashes and Magazines as soon as they are released. We also have a Group for those of you who are planning to attend the Aotearoa New Zealand ICDF Conference in April 2025.