

Refresh

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*The
Dance*



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SGM Contacts www.sgm.org.nz

Admin:

The Rev Adrienne Bruce, PO Box 33, Dannevirke 4942, Cell 021 432 768
admin@sgm.org.nz

Workgroup Convenor:

Jane Wilkinson, janeinwelly@gmail.com

Spiritual Directors Formation Programme Coordinator:

Fran Francis, 14 Oruamo Place, Beach Haven, Auckland 0626; 09 4191152 fran.francis@sgm.org.nz

Desktop Publishing and Printing:

Advocate Print, Rotorua

Refresh Editor:

Anna Johnstone, 2/143a Manuka Road, Bayview, Auckland 0629, 027 353 5646
annajay@xtra.co.nz

Cover image:

Penelope — photo by Janine Ross-Johnstone. See inside back cover.

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Katrina Tulip's art work, *We are invited to join in the Divine Dance*, was inspired by Rublev's icon. She pictures herself as the fourth person at the table.

At the heart of Christian revelation, God is not seen as a distant, static monarch but – as we will explore together – a divine circle dance, as the early Fathers of the church dared to call it (in Greek perichoresis, the origin of our word choreography). God is the Holy One presenced in the dynamic and loving action of Three. But even this Three–Fullness does not like to eat alone. This invitation to share at the divine table is probably the first biblical hint of what we would eventually call “salvation”.
Richard Rohr, *The Divine Dance* – talking about Rublev's icon.

This time...

One of the delights of my role, as editor of *Refresh*, is 'meeting' new people who email their offerings to me. Names, previously completely unknown, become real people, our conversations together can begin and my life is enriched.

But I often wish I could sit face to face with them, for then the relationships could deepen further. This isn't usually possible, but it helps to know what a person looks like, so with this in mind, I've asked each contributor to send a photo of themselves.

My sincere thanks to those whose faces are here, for their willingness to be known further and for their sharing how they experience the dance of life in words and art.

New placings are the Resources on the last page and, on the inside back cover, Thanks to Other Contributors who have helped make this *Refresh* what it is.

The Lord plays and diverts Himself in the garden of His creation, and if we could let go of our own obsession with what we think is the meaning of it all, we might be able to hear His call and follow Him in His mysterious, cosmic dance.

For the world and time are the dance of the Lord in emptiness.

The silence of the spheres is the music of a wedding feast. . .

Indeed we are in the midst of it, and it is in the midst of us, for it beats in our very blood, whether we want it to or not.

Yet the fact remains that we are invited to forget ourselves on purpose, cast our awful solemnity to the winds and join in the general dance.

Thomas Merton

I hope that in these pages, which come from open hearts, there are blessings which inspire you to enter more fully the music and dance of God in our world.

Anna

Anna Johnstone, living on Auckland's North Shore with her lovely man, Kerry, can hardly believe that life keeps getting better and better as the Trinity encourages us out of the corners and into the dance. (Bio from Refresh Seize Life! 2018)



The Circle Dance

Hilary Oxford Smith ©

"Everything in the universe has a rhythm, everything dances"

Maya Angelou

There was a dandelion clock in our garden on Sunday. Only one. A delicate timepiece.

When I was a child, I remember my grandmother saying to me, "You can tell the time by the number of puffs it takes you to blow the seed heads into the air." Very different from hearing the sound of a ticking clock on the mantelpiece or wall, marking the seconds, the minutes, the hours, the days, the months, and the years. Watching these fragile, gossamer seeds dancing in the turning patterns of the southerly wind, I imagined them journeying to different shores where the circle of life would continue to unfold.

The circle is an ancient symbol with no beginning or end. It is never broken, even in death. It symbolises the continuity of life and love and where fullness is found: John O'Donohue writes:

The Celtic world was always fascinated with circles; they are prevalent in so much of its artwork; the Celts even transfigured the Cross by surrounding it with a circle.

The Celtic Cross is a beautiful symbol. The circle around the beams of the Cross rescues the loneliness where the two lines of pain intersect; it seems to calm and console their forsaken linearity.ⁱ

I have a small Celtic cross which I bought on the island of Iona when I worked there, many moons ago. It is a replica of one of the finest standing crosses on the island. Carved in the late 7th century and dedicated to St. John the Evangelist, it is thought to be the progenitor of circled Celtic crosses. Weathered by many storms, it now survives as fragments that have been put back together and can be seen in the Iona Abbey museum.

In the Celtic Christian world, John the Beloved is revered by many. He is thought of as the disciple who leaned against Jesus at the Last Supper and heard the heartbeat of God. My friend and colleague, John Philip Newell, a theologian and wandering Celtic teacher, has written extensively about this disciple whom Jesus especially loved.

There were many testimonies to Jesus, and also writings pointing to the wisdom of Jesus, which were not included in the tightly defined canon of scripture of the 4th century imperial Church. Some were destroyed, others were lost or became fragmented. Some went underground. Yet one of the exciting aspects of this moment in time, John Philip says, is that the earth is throwing back at us some of these lost documents.

An early 2nd century Christian collection of narratives and traditions, long known in fragmentary form, The Acts of John did not make it into the canon. In the collection, there is a beautiful description of the Last Supper. After eating together, Jesus invites the disciples to form a circle. With Jesus standing in the centre, they start a simple Hebrew circle dance as he sings to them and they offer antiphonal responses. He says to them, "I will pipe...dance all of you...I will mourn, lament all of you. The whole universe takes part in the dance."

Christ is viewed as leading us not into a separation from the world and the rest of humanity, but into a renewed relationship with the ground of life, the One from whom all things come.

Jesus' words point to the dance of life and... also to the brokenness of the dance and to the sufferings that disharmony brings. Jesus is speaking of a harmony at the heart of life. And he is pointing to a way of moving in relation to all things, even though he knows also the price of living in relation to such unity.

Christ is viewed as leading us not into a separation from the world and the rest of humanity, but into a renewed relationship with the ground of life, the One from whom all things come.ⁱⁱ

In these present times, is this ancient and sacred circle dance encouraging you and me, to ask what new truth, what new ways of being, thinking, believing, seeing, doing, and living are trying to come into greater clarity for us?

Dance to the Music of Time is a work of art sculpted by Terry Stringer ONZM (Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit). Positioned at the gateway into and out of the City of Nelson at the top of the South Island, the bronze sculpture looks out over the tidal estuary of Nelson Haven and the sheltering long barrier spit of Te Tahuna a Tama (The Boulder Bank). The presence of tangata whenua in this area spans some 1000 years. It has always been revered and respected as a rich food basket and a gathering place. Four figures on the sculpture represent the seasons of the year. Summer picks early fruit; Autumn makes wine; Winter's wahine carries a kete of fish; Spring is a small child's face. There is also the suggestion of a giant sea bird in the overall shape of the sculpture - a watchful guardian over the people and the city.

ⁱ John O'Donohue, *Anam Cara*, p.202 (Transworld Ireland 1997)

ⁱⁱ J. Philip Newell, *Christ of the Celts: The Healing of Creation*, (Jossey-Boss 2008)



Dance to the Music of Time – Terry Stringer. The title is taken from the novel series by Anthony Powell, who took it from the painting by Nicolas Poussin. Photo - Tim Cuff.

The softness, circularity and fluidity of movement tells the story of the interconnectedness and interrelationship of all living and non-living things. It offers the most powerful and tender music and invites us to dance.

Join me .

We clasp the hands of those that go before us,
 And the hands of those who come after us.
 We enter the little circle of each other's arms
 And the larger circle of lovers,
 Whose hands are joined in a dance
 And the larger circle of all creatures
 Passing in and out of life
 Who move also in a dance
 To a music so subtle and vast that no ear hears it
 Except in fragments. ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱⁱⁱ Wendell Berry, *The Larger Circle*

Hilary Oxford Smith is a Church of Scotland minister, an Associate Member of the Iona Community and a published author. Hilary offers retreats in contemplative spirituality, Celtic Christianity and bereavement care and is also a Spiritual Companion.



Being 'Played', Being 'Prayed'

Pamela Gordon

I tune my harp strings and choose what to play.
Both the harp and I, are intrinsic to the music.
The harp plays me as I play the harp. It's integral, reciprocal. I am played.
The music influences how I am playing. I'm changed by the sound that I hear. As I listen, it drives my interpretation, it changes my mood. I am played.
The pauses, the silences, all part of the rhythm. I accept my mistakes, and there're always mistakes. In music it's easy to often resolve them... Not quite so easy in life. I am played.
There is no music without a real listener. There are waves, but if there're no ears, then it doesn't exist, there's no sound, there's no song, But by listening to music, I'm played.
So too with prayer..... I tune my thoughts like I tune strings of my harp. I choose what I have on my mind and my heart. In choosing, I change, I am played.



Pamela Gordon lives on a community organic farm, loves the seasonal cycles, her music, and enabling precious connections. Poetry is her way of savouring the moments.

Sarah's Circle

Heather Kelly

The subject of 'dance' has reminded me of an act of worship with accompanying words which I practised in the 1980s. I offer this contribution as the words and actions were 'born' during a time of contemplation.
It was a simple circle dance of one step round, one step in and one step out – repeated in the tempo of the singing. It began with two people; the second placed their hand on the shoulder of the first singing...
v1. "We are dancing Sarah's circle" x3
"celebrating God!"
v2. "If you love God come and join us" x3
"celebrating God!"
v3 "Every round grows wider, wider" x3
"celebrating God!"
v4. "Dance, sing, give God glory!" x3
"celebrating God!"
After the invitation of v2 and when they saw the simple movements, other people joined ... and continued to join.
The leader decided when to repeat or change to the next verse.
To end the dance the leader repeated v4, slowing the tempo to end and then led a communal 'Amen' spoken by the dancers, some of whom raised their hands in the air.
The dance was a contemplative action for all but the leader.

After the words and the actions 'came to me', I enlisted co-operation from other 'liberals' until it was offered as an act of worship as part of a Methodist Sunday evening service.



Heather Kelly, resident in a retirement village in Invercargill, is energised by the glory of the Creator's handiwork and by the surprising God who continues to call her in the late Autumn of her life.

The Dance

Adrienne Malcomson

I am standing outside a church and people are walking up the path to the entrance. Men, women and children are greeting each other "Hello, it is good to see you. How has your week been?"

I move a little closer and inside I see more people talking, laughing and yet some are sitting quietly not engaging with others yet still part of what is happening. There is music playing and the sound makes me feel like dancing!

Do I enter, or do I stay outside? I feel drawn to these strangers who are welcoming me with their smiles and inviting words, "Come in and join us in the dance!"

The dance of people, together with one voice, all here to praise and sing the dance of worship to the One who created each one of them uniquely and wonderfully made.

Yes, I will accept their invitation to me, a stranger in their midst. They draw me in with their welcome, their joy, inviting me to their Sunday worship of praise. They say, "Come, dance with us, pray with us, sing with us."

The dance of worship has begun.

Let's Dance

Paul Frommont

In *New Seeds of Contemplation*, Thomas Merton, writing under the essay title, *The General Dance*, reflects on the cosmic dance of incarnation and creation:

...If we could let go of our own obsession with what we think is the meaning of ... the garden of [God's] creation... we might be able to hear his call and follow him in his mysterious cosmic dance... We do not have to go very far to catch ... that dancing. When we are alone on a starlit night; when by chance we see the migrating birds in autumn descending on a grove of junipers to rest and eat; when we see children in a moment when they are really children; when we know love in our hearts; or when, like the old Japanese poet Bashō we hear an old frog land in a quiet pond with a solitary splash - at such times the awakening, the turning inside out of all values, the *newness*, the emptiness and the purity of vision, [that's what] provide[s] a vision of the cosmic dance...¹

Merton evokes in me a feeling of invitation, the sense that creation and incarnation are arms and hands, reaching for me, pulling me into the holy dance of life itself.

Euan Macleod and the Dance

It's [the] dialogue between the figure and the landscape that seems to be what's important: the vulnerability of that figure ... There certainly is a lot of psychological drama in them, ... and often the figure takes a while to find its place. It's like the figure wanders around a little bit in the landscape before it feels settled."²

In 2010 I bought myself the newly published book, *Euan Macleod: The Painter in the Painting*. I don't recall where I'd first seen images of Macleod's paintings, but Gregory O'Brien's book provided a deeper introduction to Macleod and his art.

Born in Christchurch in 1956, Macleod's work, for me at least, is concerned with the natural landscape and embodied human presences within it. When eventually I stood in front of an exhibition of his paintings, at the Waikato Museum in 2015, I was captivated and transported. Wow!

Few artists, John McDonald reflects in his foreword to O'Brien's book, "delve so consistently and deeply into the 'inner life', while rarely deviating from the genre of landscape, or figure-in-a-landscape."



Adrienne Malcomson, an Anglican priest, enjoys living in a retirement village in Tauranga with her husband, John and a very indulged cat. She has always enjoyed writing and has self-published four books for young people.

¹Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, p. 292, 296 & 297.

²Euan Macleod in conversation with Gregory O'Brien at Gallery One, *Te Manawa*, Palmerston North 05/09/2017

For Macleod, "...the canvas is not only a mirror in which he finds himself, it is also a doorway into a world that lies beyond ... [His] paintings have, at their core, a sense of the mystery of human life and of a vast perplexing universe which lies beyond human comprehension ...:" Meister Eckhart, long, long ago, said something similar: "When the soul wants to experience something she throws out an image in front of her and then steps into it."

... am I settling for being less than fully, fearlessly and freely human, less than who I'm called to be in Christ Jesus?

As I look at Macleod's paintings they ask me personal questions, ones such as: am I settling for being less than fully, fearlessly and freely human, less than who I'm called to be in *Christ Jesus*? How does God see me? How might I be disconnected from my deepest essence? Misaligned, for example, by trauma? How am I being invited to take my inner life more seriously, more creatively? In what ways am I being invited, or encouraged, to live more consistently out of what Parker Palmer calls "a hidden wholeness"?

Macleod's paintings invite me into the **dance of incarnation**, invite me to take my bodily existence seriously. They invite me to live more deeply into my identity, my history, and the history of this land with all its stories and contemporary invitations to live more justly, and in ways that humanise rather than dehumanise, both myself and others.

Poets and the Dance

I began to realise that my identity depended not upon any beliefs I had, inherited beliefs or manufactured beliefs, but my identity actually depended on how much attention I was paying to things that were other than myself — and that as you deepen this intentionality and this attention, you [start] to broaden and deepen your own sense of presence.ⁱⁱⁱ

Mary Oliver, David Whyte, Belden Lane, Wendell Berry, and Oturehna residents Brian Turner, Jillian Sullivan, and Bridget Auchmuty are examples of people who help me broaden and deepen my own sense of being and of presence. They help me pay attention to life and my relationship to it. They are poets and essayists of quiet watchful presence, curiosity, heart, love, humility, weather, and place. They **see the dance**, the interdependence, the interplay between what the Nicene Creed calls the 'seen and [the] unseen'.

Each, I suspect, attends in their own ways to the numinous. They listen, they notice, they make connections, and in Brian's case, with one of his 'commonplace' notebooks in front of him, I watch him record a thought, a quote, a word, something he's heard or seen, something important to him.

Each of these fellow explorers is known for their clear-sighted and evocative engagement with the natural world, with what it means to be human, singularly and relationally. They tell it slant. They help me find my way into the **dance of creation**, into the movements and rhythms of Spirit, into change, healing, and growth. And, without knowing it, they invite me into the living of everything I know about God: life, life, and more life.

The shrewdest observations,
the most musical
of phrasings, rank as holy,
are like children
who take your hand
and hold on tight
because they need
your love as much
as you need theirs.^{iv}

In reading them, or talking to them when that's possible, I'm drawn to their honesty of vision, their quiet depth, their wisdom, their spare clarity, their humble immersion in, and their gratitude for the "one wild and precious life"^v we've each been gifted.

They see what I so often miss in my inattentiveness and haste, but, encouraged by them, I'm learning to look, to see, to experience the dance. I'm slowly working to strip away what isn't truly important.

More room in your heart for love,
for the trees! For the birds who own
nothing - the reason they can fly.^{vi}

They invite me to live more simply, "to jettison all the stuff that clutters my material, intellectual, and spiritual worlds."^{vii}

The loveliest places of all
are those that look as if
there's nothing there
to those still learning to look.^{viii}

ⁱⁱⁱ Brian Turner, *Poets and Poetry* in his collection *Night Fishing*, p.55.

^v Mary Oliver, *The Summer Day* published in her 1990 collection *House of Light*.

^{vi} Mary Oliver, *Storage*, published in her 2016 collection *Felicity*, p.31.

^{vii} Parker Palmer.

^{viii} Brian Turner, his poem, *Deserts*, for instance in *Brian Turner: Selected Poems* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2019), p.148.

ⁱⁱⁱ David Whyte, interviewed, *On Being* April 7, 2016.

... [May] your
spirit grow in curiosity, that your
life be richer than it is, that you
bow to the earth as you feel how it
actually is, that we - so clever, and
ambitious, and selfish, and unrestrained -
are only one design of the moving, the
vivacious many.^x

They lead the way into what David Whyte calls “the conversational nature of reality”,
“the old unaccountable unfolding...^{xv}” They beckon me into a “wish to feel part of
something wholly explicable and irreplaceable, something enduring and wholesome ... a
nor’wester’s gusting in the pines like operatic laughter, and the roadside grasses ... laced
with blue and orange and pink of bugloss, poppies and yarrow, all of them swishing,
dancing, bending, as they do, as we do.”^{xvi}

Do you bow your head when you pray or do you look
up into that blue space?
Take your choice, prayers fly in all directions.
And don’t worry about what language you use,
God no doubt understands them all.
Even when swans are flying north and making
such a ruckus of noise, God is surely listening
and understanding.^{xvii}

I walk the coastal Whale Bay/Matapouri Beach loop track in Northland. Two gulls are
overhead. I think appreciatively of my wife. I think of each creative that I’ve mentioned
above: Tom, Euan, Parker, David, Mary, Belden, Wendell, Brian, Jillian, and Bridget. I
walk. I feel their ongoing invitation into what Richard Rohr calls “the divine flow”. Jillian
reminds me that when I write, I’m the one “who travels to the deeper place...^{xviii}” Bridget
reminds me of the importance of “the strings of the heart that knit.”^{xix}

I’m grateful to each for the gifts they give, mostly unbeknownst to them, invariably
unexpected by me, but arriving nonetheless, at just the right time.

^x Mary Oliver, adapted excerpt from her poem, The Moth, The Mountains, The River in *A Thousand Mornings*
(2012)

^x Wendell Berry, The Thought of Something Else in his collection *The Peace of Wild Things*, p.13.

^{xii} Brian Turner, Just This in his collection *Just This*, p.26.

^{xiii} Mary Oliver, from *Whistling Swans*, collected in *Felicity*, p.29.

^{xviii} Jillian Sullivan, *Fishing from the Boat Ramp* (Wellington: Steele Roberts, 2009), p.139.

^{xix} Bridget Auchmuty, in her poem, The Hitch, collected in *Unmooring* (Christchurch: Quentin Wilson
Publishing, 2020), p.26.

Beyond midlife now, I’m still learning to trust the benevolence of life. I know that I have
but one finite life and I’m very thankful for it. Life is both precious and fragile, truths I’m
reminded of every day. Being here, being at home in this land, in this body, choosing
every day to be as fully alive as I’m able, being *for* life, *for* love, and *for* all that sustains
and enriches them, these are now amongst my most important life tasks.

There are lots of ways to dance and
to spin, sometimes it just starts my
feet first then my entire body, I am
spinning no one can see it but it is
happening. I am so glad to be alive,
I am so glad to be loving and loved ...^{xv}

Loving and loved. Skin to skin, this is the slow dance I choose to give myself to, every
day anew. Incarnation and Creation. Creating, being, becoming - the dance.

^{xv} Mary Oliver, the opening section of, If I Were, published in her 2012 collection *A Thousand Mornings*, p.11.

Paul Fromont lives in Cambridge. He wanders far and wide, with much
gratitude, throughout our amazing country, with his wife, Gita. They
both feel the lure of the sea and dream one day of moving from Inland
to coastal New Zealand.



Come Dance for Me

Jo Anastadiadis

I sat in a room full of others
And as we worshipped, I sensed God's
call ... "Come dance for Me."

No! What would the others think?
"... Come dance for Me."

I can't dance.

I'm overweight and uncoordinated.

"... Come dance for Me."

I can't. You ask too much.

They'll laugh, think I'm odd.

They'll reject me.

"... Come dance for Me."

I'll lift my hands and sing.

I'll kneel, I'll even prostrate myself,

But please don't ask me to dance!

I'll dance in heaven,

I'll be free then, nothing will matter

then except You

Can't it wait till then ...

Please!

"... Come dance for Me."

I feel wretched beyond belief.

I cannot sing, cannot worship at all.

I sit and know I am refusing.

I cannot even pray anymore.

I don't want to dance!

But I do want to follow.

Oh God help me!

You must help me ... please!

... OK, I'll dance for You.

With a face flushed red from
embarrassment

Arms feeling like stiff rods;

Legs feeling uncoordinated and wooden;

I danced.

I danced because God asked me
And for no other reason.
I danced in acquiescence, nothing more.

And now, some years later?

I dance to worship,

Because just singing, just raising

my hands is not enough sometimes.

Sometimes I need to move my

whole body to really worship,

To give all of who I am to God;

To truly honour the Lord.

Have I never argued about dancing again?

Not on your life!

I still argue, still at times say no.

Or at times am slow to respond to

the Spirit's stirrings within me.

When I stay still I feel disappointed,

I did not give my all in worship.

I allowed my fears of what others

might think to dictate to me.

Am I back where I started?

No, I don't think so.

With the Lord's help I have stepped

through the barrier of fear.

The more often I step through

The easier it is to take the step next time,

And the next time.

To face my fear

I've had to act, and act, and act.

I've had to rely on God.

Again and again and again.

God asked and God has also enabled.

Without the Lord I would still be

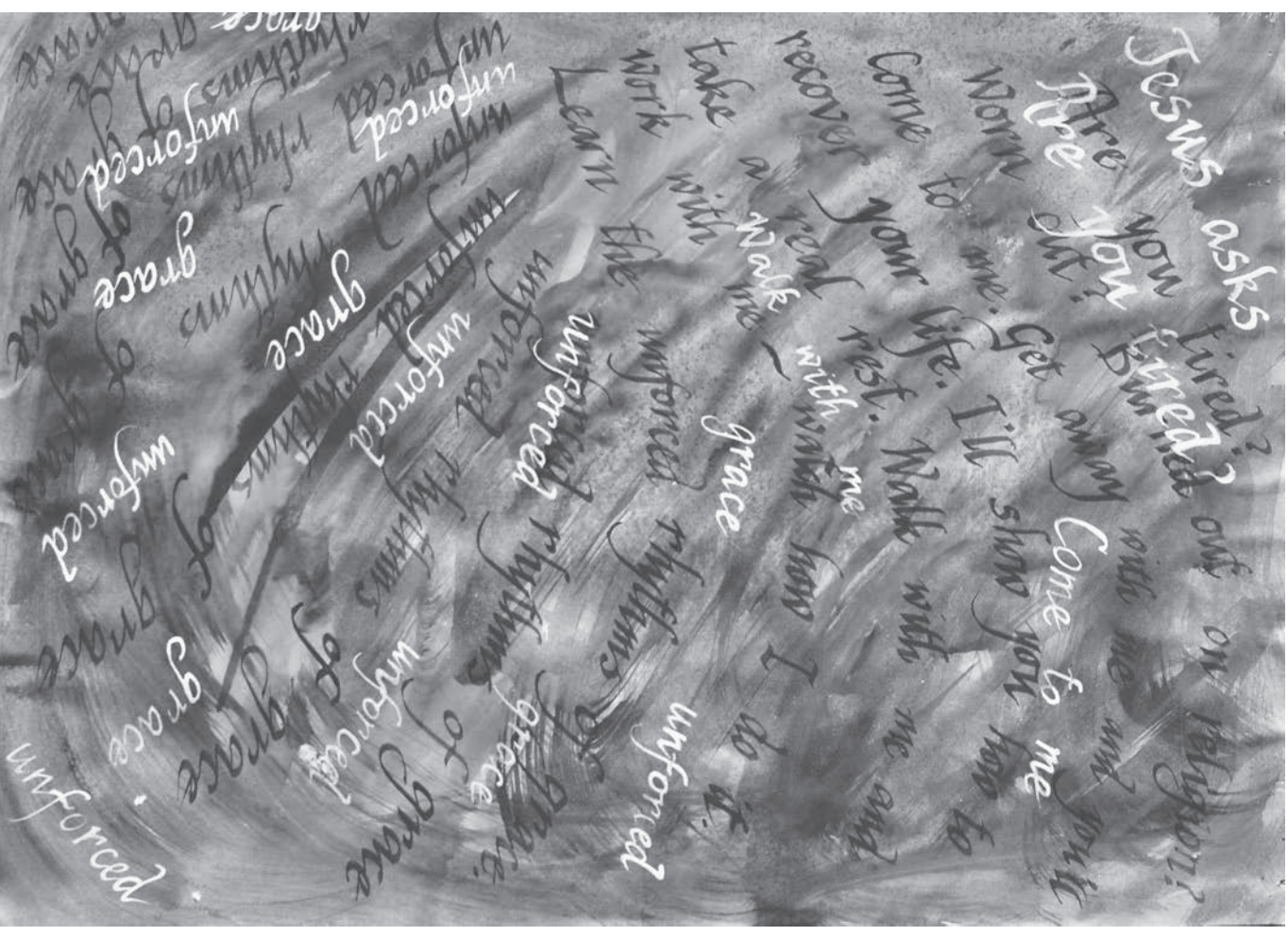
bound by fear.

As I rely on God,

As I fix my eyes on God,

I am free!

*Jo Anastadiadis, a spiritual director in Wellington, loves God's creation
and seeing others grow in their relationship with God. She has recently
rediscovered the delight of play with her young grandchildren and the
joy of simple moments.*



Anna Johnstone

Responding to the Dance of Divine Love through Nature

Katrina Tulip

The invitation to dance with the Divine is often extended to us through nature. Certainly, this has been my experience. In April 2024, for the first time in years, I found myself back at the St. Francis Friary in Auckland on a retreat. I wandered around the grounds refamiliarising myself with the beckoning paths and leafy nooks. I walked towards a particular lawn and stood in the middle of it. Turning around slowly, I relived a memory of a night on retreat when I had danced with joyful abandon on this grassy stage surrounded by darkly silhouetted trees before the silent audience of the moon and stars. I smiled as I recalled feelings of exhilaration and vitality, unseen by human eyes, drawn by Divine Mystery.

That was not the first time I had received a nocturnal invitation to dance. I remember as a child waking in the night to see the full moon shining through the curtains, urging me to sneakily climb out of the window and cavort around the garden, feeling naughty, joyous and carefree! God was distant and unknown in those juvenile days, but Mother Nature I perceived as inviting and welcoming: a veritable treasure trove of discovery and delight, and a welcome haven from the troublesome aspects of childhood. Thanks to her, I was participating in the divine dance even though I didn't understand this at the time!

Lines from a poem by Mary Oliver come to mind:

*Oh, mother earth
Your comfort is great
Your arms never withhold.
It has saved my life to know this
Your rivers flowing
Your roses opening in the morning.
Oh, motions of tenderness!*¹

These words resonate with my life journey, especially the past two years. During this period of demanding interior work, I have been graced with openness and receptivity to "motions of tenderness" within the natural realm. These insightful experiences have been a rich source of consolation to me in these Covid-restricted times when face-to-face access to friends and soul companions hasn't been so readily available, and hugs harder to come by. Lyrics from St Francis of Assisi's Canticle of the Creatures sung with gentle, joyful feeling by Simon de Voil, sum up my experience beautifully:

*Most high, all-powerful, precious God
Through Mother Earth we see your face
You who govern all of life
Sustain and nurture all that is...*²

¹ Excerpt from *Loneliness from Devotions: The Selected Poems of Mary Oliver*. (Penguin Books, 2020) p.23.
² Simon de Voil's version can be found on YouTube and Spotify.

Here are five recent memorable moments selected from the plethora filling my inner kete³ when I've felt invited to notice and respond to the dance of Divine Love within creation.

One morning, I felt prompted to bike along a trail on the other side of town. It was sunny and hot with a gusty westerly. Flowers everywhere were in full bloom. Near the start of the trail, I came across a well-eaten swan plant beside a bush festooned with clusters of small pink flowers. Several monarch butterflies were fluttering about, and others were sheltering on and feeding from the adjacent bush. I stopped, transfixed by the sight of so many butterflies in one place.

*I can function as designed,
despite my own brokenness,
and I know how to draw on the
Ultimate Source of Life.*

My eyes focused on one particular monarch and I followed its zig-zagging flight. Despite being buffeted by the wind, it managed to alight adroitly on a swaying frond of lilac flowers and began sipping on the life-giving nectar. I gasped with surprise. Now that the butterfly was still, I could see that it was missing nearly half a wing – and yet it was able to fly in challenging conditions and zero in to its food source. I marvelled at how well this damaged creature functioned, how it could do all it was designed to do, despite a broken wing!

I made the connection: I can function as designed, despite my own brokenness, and I know how to draw on the Ultimate Source of Life. The butterfly paused long enough to be caught on camera, giving me a permanent visual reminder of this unexpected gift from a nurturing God: an invitation to enablement, for my encouragement, and so I can similarly encourage others.

Another day I sat having lunch in the shade of a tree at a local park. I noticed a mother duck with three ducklings swimming in the pond nearby. The ducklings saw me, and two of them, hoping to be fed, climbed out and toddled eagerly towards me. The third duckling took its time to emerge from the water. I quickly saw why. It was missing a leg! It hopped over to mother duck, sitting by the pond edge, and nestled in beside her, while she calmly kept a watchful gaze upon her more daring offspring - and on me. Once the venturesome pair realised that tidbits were not forthcoming, they wandered back and settled down with the others. Again, I was taken by this encounter and pondered its message.

Maintaining the maternal metaphor, I reflected that when we step out and take the risk of following an invitation to try something new, challenging or scary, we can be sure of Mother God's protective and continuous gaze. If needed, she will come and rescue us. However, she gives us room to explore and try out our developing wings. If at any time our courage falters and we feel vulnerable and exposed, we can scurry back to burrow into her soft feathers, warmed and comforted by her sheltering presence. Then with renewed confidence, once more secure in the knowledge of her love, we can venture out again towards new horizons.

³ Māori word for a woven flax bag.



Katrina Tulip

The beach is a rich source of divine invitation and I'm blessed to have spent my formative years within walking distance of one. One morning I was wandering along this same surf beach on a particularly windy day. Among the dune grasses, I noticed spinnifex seed heads, more commonly known as tumbleweeds. My thoughts flashed back to childhood: of running along in the wet sand at low tide, chasing after a tumbleweed as it rolled and bounced along. Just as I would lean down to grab it, a gust would pick it up, and with a burst of energy it would evade my grasp. I laughed merrily at such trickery!^{iv} Back to the present moment. My inner child had awakened to the invitation of spontaneous playfulness, so I chose a tumbleweed and tossed it in front of me. The breeze caught it and it began to roll towards the sea. I jogged along behind until the spiky ball came to rest at the water's edge where I picked it up and resumed my walk. The tumbleweed now sits amongst my nature collection, a reminder that: *We don't stop playing because we grow old, we grow old because we stop playing.*^v It points me to Jesus' invitation: *"Keep company with me and you'll learn to live (dance) freely and lightly."*^v

The rocky coastline offers invitations too. One morning on a recent epic road trip, I stopped at the Shag Point Lookout to view the seals. It was a stunningly gorgeous day and no-one else was there – perfect! Gazing around, my attention was soon arrested by a small emerald-green pool among the rocks, where a fur seal was basking. He lay there partly submerged, every so often rolling over in a leisurely fashion so his underside received the warmth of the sun. Then he would slowly turn back the other way. Once he popped his snout out of the water and gave a huge yawn, as though overcome with the effort of sheer relaxation! His lengthy spa session ended when he clambered out to sunbathe on a flat, solar-heated rock.

I was struck by the seal's complete abandonment to savouring the present moment. He was enjoying it for all it was worth with no interest in other would-be distractions – least of all me! God's invitation to me through this interlude was obvious!

Here's one last coastal encounter. Early one morning I sat on the sand at Pink Beach, hidden away in Shakespear Regional Park. The cove was deserted, except for a nesting gull, a pair of oyster-catchers and a lone dotterel wandering along the water's edge. I had been listening to the soft, haunting voice of Enya on Spotify, and was feeling overwhelmed with gratitude for God's care and provision:

*How long your love had sheltered me
You held me high, You held me high
A harbour holding back the sea
So I could find my way...^{vi}*

The sun was shining, the mood mellow, and the surface of the milky sea sparkled like diamonds, dazzling my eyes. Small waves were gliding in and breaking gently on the

^{iv} George Bernard Shaw.

^v Matthew 11:28-30. TM. Modified by me!

^{vi} Song title: *So I Could Find My Way*.

shore with soothing regularity. As the waves slid towards me, one after the other, I glimpsed the vastness of Divine Love - wider, longer, higher and deeper than the ocean,^{vii} continuously flowing towards me and all of creation. ^{viii} And the invitation? Simply to relax and be still, with my heart open to receive.

The ripple effects of dancing with “the eternal mystery that enables, enfolds and enlivens all things”^{ix} include: sharing my “nature noticing” on social media; facilitating others to get out into the cathedral of the great outdoors; beautifying Mother Earth by picking up rubbish on my walks and supporting various conservation groups.

Thomas Berry provides a fitting summation:

The natural world tells us: I will feed you. I will clothe you. I will shelter you. I will heal you. Only do not so devour me or use me that you destroy my capacity to mediate the divine and the human. For I offer you a communion with the divine. I offer you gifts that you can exchange with each other. I offer you flowers whereby you may express your reverence for the divine and your love for each other. In the vastness of the sea, in the snow-covered mountains, in the rivers flowing through the valleys, in the serenity of the landscape, and in the foreboding of the great storms that sweep over the land, in all these experiences I offer you inspiration for your music, for your art, your dance.^x

Truly, the triune Lord of The Dance comes to us - in and through the natural world that we are so abundantly blessed to enjoy in Aotearoa New Zealand!

^{vii} See Ephesians 3:17-19.

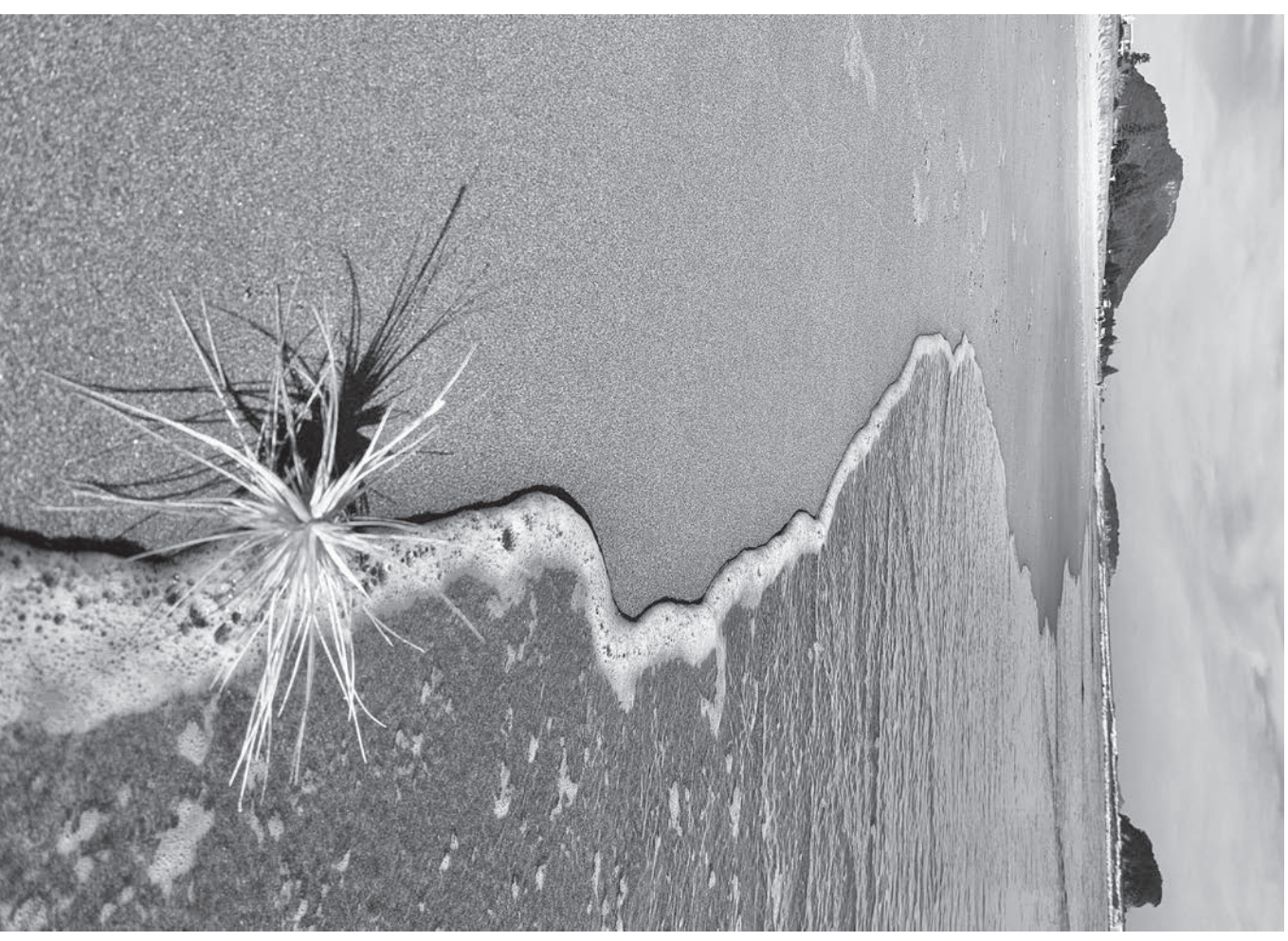
^{viii} See Psalm 145:9.

^{ix} Richard Rohr, *The Divine Dance*. (New Kensington: Whitaker House, 2016) p.117.

^x Thomas Berry, *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community*. Edited by Mary Evelyn Tucker (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2006) p.139.

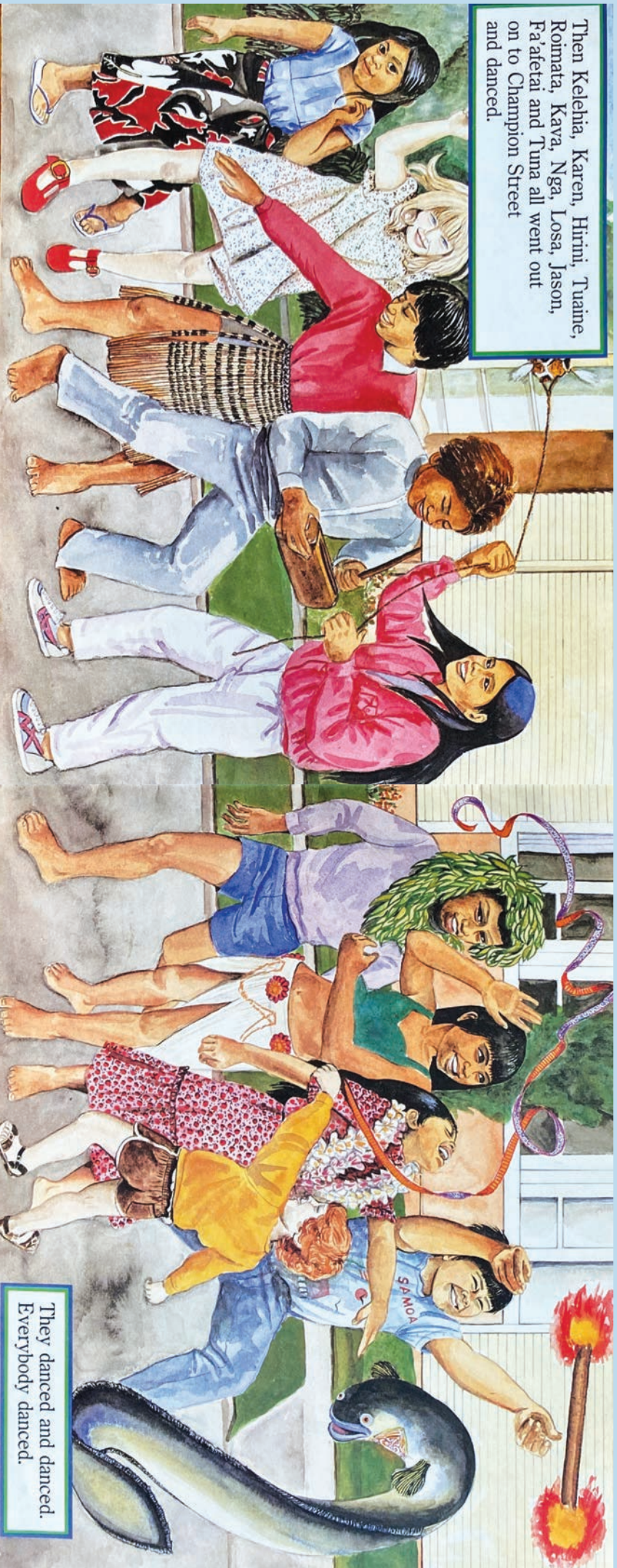


Katrina Tulip has recently completed her training as a Spiritual Director and is passionate about spiritual formation. She is a primary school relief teacher and a trained masseuse. She lives in Tauranga with husband Phillip, who shares her love of adventure and exploration within the cathedral of the Great Outdoors.



Spinnifex - Katrina Tulip

Then Kelehia, Karen, Hirimi, Tuaine, Roimata, Kava, Nga, Losa, Jason, Fa'afetai and Tuna all went out on to Champion Street and danced.



They danced and danced.
Everybody danced.

The Dance of Love

Trish McBride

God, You are the Dance
The Dance of Love
The Dance of Life

In the beginning, as Creative Energy
You danced in the atoms
As they joined together
Became stars and planets and moons
You dance in swirling galaxies
You danced in cells as they learned
To be alive in slime
And as they learned to feed
Reproduce and change

You dance Love still
In the atoms and cells
Of all that is
Including ours

To us You give choice
The choice
To go our own way
Or dance in Love in You

May we choose to join
The Dance of Love
The Dance that brings peace
Compassion, respect

For You present
In all your other Dancings
For ourselves as You dance
Our hearts, veins, bones and spirits
For Papatuanuku and all her peoples
That all will learn deeper understanding
For Mother Earth as she writes
With those who will not dance
For us all when we miss
The heartbeat step
Of Your invitation to join
The Dance of Cosmic Love.

Dance us to our fullness!

*God is love, and all who live in love live in
God, and God lives in them.*
1 John 4:16

To do Battle, or to Dance a life fantastic with Death?

Ross Scott

I was confronted with prostate cancer for the second time in my late 50s. I was also confronted with the encouraging language of fight, battle, and staging war with the cancer. It seemed like to do anything less was to give in to the cancer. As cancers go, prostate is a slow one and this leads to a lack of urgency within the health profession. I had six months before treatment started. In this time I reflected on the language we use around cancer, and many illnesses. This language of fighting, and the victory is when a 'life is saved'. Otherwise, it is said that they 'lost the battle'.

*Somehow Death has lost its place
as part of the rhythm of life
and become an enemy
to be conquered.*

I have worked as a chaplain in the health system long enough to know it is incapable of saving life. Yes, it can extend life, it can change the 'cause of death' on a death certificate, replacing cancer with heart disease or diabetes or stroke. But to my knowledge, there has been a 100% death rate in every generation up to the present.

Somehow Death has lost its place as part of the rhythm of life and become an enemy to be conquered. I see people fighting for the 'sanctity of life' but the 'sanctity of death' lies neglected in the scramble for eternity on earth. In my childhood there was a song, 'Everybody wants to go to heaven but nobody wants to die'. My observation is that for much of society the song has been reduced to 'Nobody wants to die'. And yes, in my late 50s, I was not keen on dying either. But doing battle with Death seemed at odds with my faith, the way my spirituality was developing.

As I reflected on this, the words 'rhythm of life' led me to a new metaphor. Dance. I have been doing a 'Dance with Death' all my life.

It is a beautiful concept. For in dance there is a partner rather than an enemy. And Cancer has been one of the forms Death has taken in dance. In a dance I have respect for my partner. Respect that my partner is an ever-present part of the dance. A dance partner cannot be taken for granted and I have come to see they will lead from time to time.

With a regular dance partner a 'knowing' develops. Death often sets the style, be it a set piece like a 'line dance' or improvisation. One day an exhilarating 'tango' to be enjoyed, then over a number of years a slow and repetitive 'fox trot'. Then the unexpected and challenging 'break dance' stretching every muscle, to be followed by the sheer beauty and meditative intensity of the 'Destiny Waltz'. With the use of music, Death holds me in the dance. It gives the foundation. It crafts the shape, the form, and gives voice to the dance.



Trish McBride is a Wellington writer, a retired counsellor and spiritual director. Her three books trace her God-journey over the last 70+ years. She is poised for a major life transition to a retirement village, a spiritual journey in itself. A seniors' drama class provides fun.

At times, the tempo is overwhelming. At times, it will be as gentle as the song of a bird in the evening, enticing me back to the Garden of Eden. Reminding me that I am formed from the earth and one day will return to it.

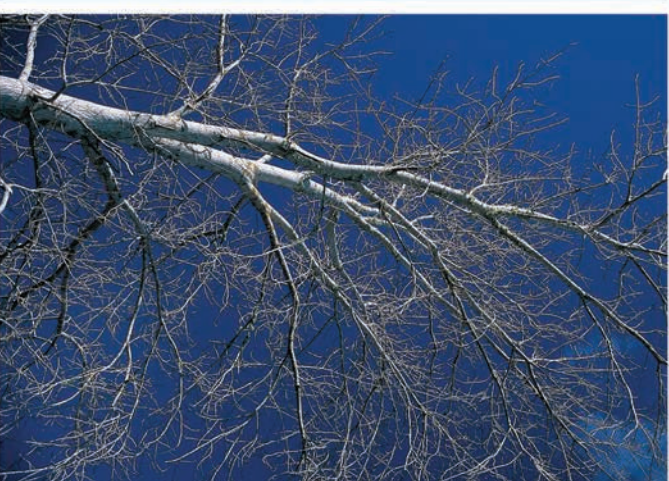
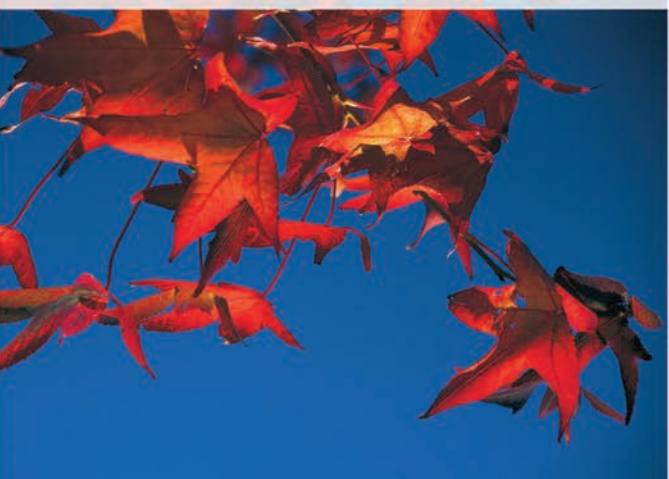
And my spirituality is what holds me in the dance. It informs me, guiding my steps into the harmony of the natural cycles of life and death, of God.

Dancing with Death keeps me anchored to my humanity and my place in creation. A fight, a battle comes from the delusion that we are at war with creation. It is one in which we will use ever-increasing levels of technology to try to win. But in the end, we will always lose. It is only in the dance that there is no loser. For in dance we are drawn into relationship with the world.

I have now danced the Cancer tango and my dance goes on. One day my dance will come to an end and Death and I will bow to each other, embrace, and depart together as the beat of the heart, the dance, will be still.



Ross Scott originated in the Deep South. He has had 30 plus years in ordained ministry, most of which has been in health chaplaincy. He is looking forward to developing a lifestyle block in the Waitarapa in the years to come, rediscovering the cycle of seasons and the challenge of the unexpected.



Seasons: Photos - Anna Johnstone. Design - Steve Johnstone

Dancing in the Downpour

Phillip Donnell

"Come to me... Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace." Matthew 11:28 TM

"...because of the joy that was waiting for him, he thought nothing of the disgrace of dying on the cross, and he is now seated at the right side of God's throne." Hebrews 12:2 GNT

Jesus, our troupe leader,
is the one who knows how
to dance in a downpour,
and is willing to teach us
the rhythm, tune and steps –
so we don't trip and fall,
give it all up as hopeless
or drown in our sorrows!



Illustration by Katrina Tulip

Phillip Donnell (married to Katrina Tulip) a retired Baptist pastor living in Tauranga, leads Footsteps Walking Club of Aotearoa NZ & New Creation New Zealand. His 3 children and 11 grandchildren are a major preoccupation. He enjoys writing, running, walking, kayaking, genealogy & travel.



Don Your Dancing Shoes

Phillip Donnell

Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this, Martha?" John 11:25-26 NLT

The bodies we now have are weak and can die. But they will be changed into bodies that are eternal. Then the Scriptures will come true:

"Death has lost the battle! Where is its victory? Where is its sting?"

Sin is what gives death its sting, and the Law is the power behind sin. But thank God for letting our Lord Jesus Christ give us the victory! 1 Corinthians 15:54-57 CEV

If the rock was rolled
and the Lord is living,
then fetch forth your fiddle,
don your dancing shoes,
and prepare for a party,
because death is nothing to fear!

His rising guarantees ours!
Or, to put it another way:
Death has been defied!
Death has been disabled!
Death has been defeated!
Death has been dethroned!
Death, in fact, has died!

For Martha and for us,
believing this makes all
the difference in the world!

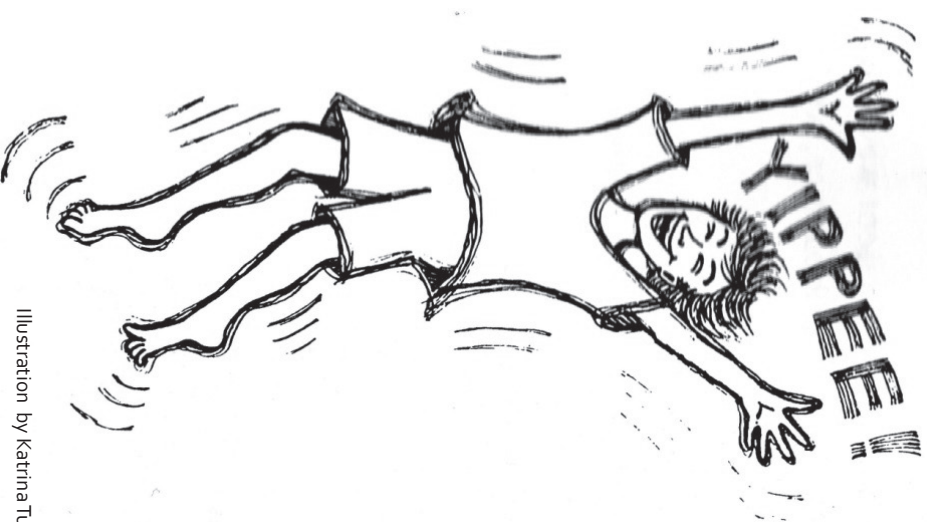


Illustration by Katrina Tulip

Dancing

Margaret Gwynn

When I was a child, I learned Highland dancing and as a teenager, there were ballroom lessons. I enjoyed both but when I began to take my spiritual journey seriously, there was another dimension entirely.

It began at a weekend: 'On being woman', my first encounter with Spiritual Growth Ministries. Given a generous dollop of silence, I found I wanted to move my arms to express, praise, awe, pleading. I mentioned this in a group session and Sister Mary Concannon encouraged me to explore further.

On my first silent retreat, I crafted a dance to 'The Lord of the Dance', which I later offered in church with two other women. I joined Christian Dance Fellowship which gave me a chance to dance round the Square in Palmerston North and a few years later in 1994, to join a large group of dancers to present 'Crossings' in Victoria Square in Christchurch. This was a very colourful occasion, on which groups of dancers dressed in red, yellow, green or blue, each did an intricate dance and then joined together to lift great circles of parachute silk while other dancers ran in and out underneath.

I began a small group to offer liturgical dance at my church and we performed several, among them 'Come As You Are', a song by Paul Guir, and 'I, The Lord of Sea and Sky' by Daniel Schutte in which I spread swathes of different coloured cloths down the altar steps. I also danced in the aisles sometimes but there was always an element of strain because I knew some members of the congregation were uncomfortable. When I decided to leave church in 1994, I knew that liturgical dance would be one price I would have to pay.

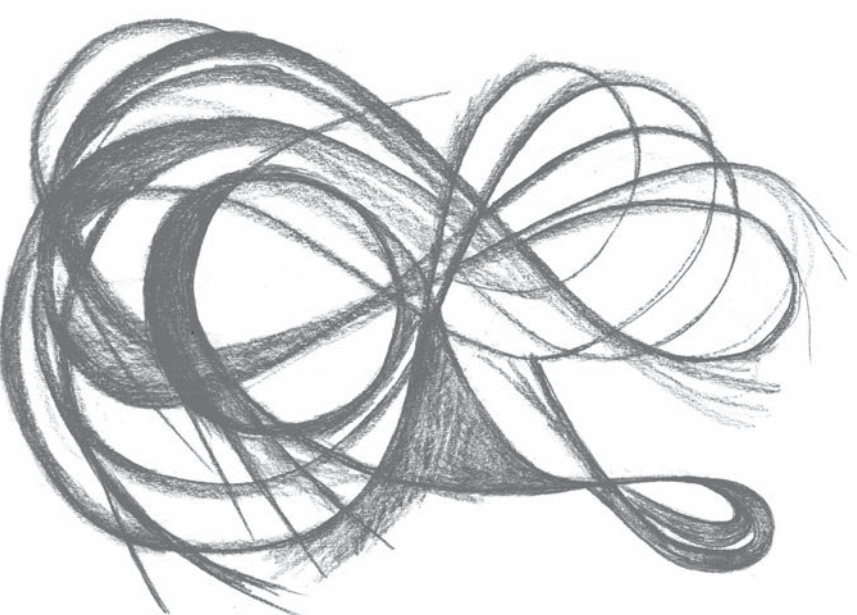
The deepest dimension of this call to dance was always on silent retreats. Music would call me to move and I always marvelled at how the dance came naturally to a close as the music concluded. On one retreat I was given a dance during the night to Brian Boninwell's song 'Will You Love Me?' and danced it during a service the next day.

The mime/dance which touched me most deeply and has stayed with me for years came at the end of a ten-day retreat. I mimed dancing with my God in deep delight, but then losing contact and searching desperately, stumbling over rough ground until I came to a large rock blocking my way. I beat on it with my fists, but it would not budge. Eventually I realised that I must first become very still. Then I could stand up, take off my outer clothes and step easily through to dance once again with my God.



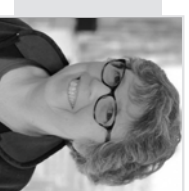
Margaret Gwynn is an 83-year-old wife, mother, Green Party member. She hopes for a hip replacement.

What has this experience of dance given me? Essentially it anchored my spiritual experiences. Christianity is an incarnational faith, Word becoming flesh. Dance was my way of grounding my discoveries. Normally I'm a very planned person. I like to be in control. Yet, here I was, in a terrifying way, yielding myself to a power that was not of my making. Also, I had to accept that the dance I offered was never as glorious as the one inside me. Now that I am living with pain and limping around with a walking stick, it is good to reflect on these times.



Holding, Moving, Holding by Trish Harris

Trish Harris writes, teaches & draws. Her Ribbonwood images come from her contemplative practice. She discovers strength and challenge in creativity, spirituality & disability – individually & as a powerful mix. Trish has published two books.



The Dance

Frances O'Leary

One day, many years ago now,
You, my Lord, invited me
to dance with you forever:
It was so easy to say, "Yes",
and our lifelong dance began.

We have danced, you and I,
through the shifting sands of time,
through many ups and downs,
through sadnesses and joys,
through births and deaths
throughout the decades of my life.

Sometimes the rhythm and beat
of the tune you were playing were,
in the noise of life, hard for me to hear.
Then it would become easy for me
to lose my step, and my footing...

But then wonderfully, you lifted me
and carried me over and above
the problems, the heartaches and the tears,
until once again peace reigned and
I would hear your music in my heart
and feel my feet grounded in your love.

Today I thank you, Lord,
for our lifelong dance of love.
And now I wait for you
to lift me once again and carry me
into the beat of your heart,
where I will truly dance with you forever.



Frances O'Leary lives in Nelson and is a wife, mother and grandmother. She enjoys playing with words that create an image.



I Never Knew...

Stuart Holmes Coleman ©

I never knew my mother
was a dancer and a lover
of ballet until suddenly
last summer when she told me
during a long phone call how she
once danced upon the stage
years ago in another age.
At that moment I realized
just as stars glimmer in the night
and the moon shines like a spotlight
my mother dances in my eyes.



Stuart Coleman is a writer, speaker and poet living in Honolulu, HI. He is the author of three non-fiction books, including the award-winning biography Eddie Would Go. www.StuartColeman.com.

The Dance

Rebecca Thompson

Having been lucky enough to be part of Dance into Worship, a liturgical, ecumenical group, in the 1980s/early 90s, the subject of this *Refresh* 'The Dance' intrigues me.

My participation with liturgical dance began, when as a new Christian I was invited to join the group by the choreographer, Honor Avis, who worshipped at the same church.

I've always been a keen dancer, having had formal ballet training as a child and studying Laban (a pioneer of modern dance) while teacher training. The 60s/70s encouraged expressive free dancing generally and Dance into Worship allowed choreographed themed freedom of expression, with beautiful music setting the scene, enabling a true sense of worship to God with the whole body.

We met every Monday evening to rehearse, participating in different church services when invited. We had weekend workshops at regular intervals where experienced dancers joined us, enabling more ambitious dances to be created, e.g., Pilgrims Progress.

In the context of the visual impact of Liturgical Dance for an audience, we always got positive feedback. However, for the participants, being able to express one's faith through dance was very healing and meaningful.

My personal participation with Dance into Worship culminated in an evening service in Westminster Abbey on 13th October 1996, when we performed *The Translation of St Edward, King and Confessor, 1163 and 1269*.

We were sent out from Westminster Abbey with the final prayer...

*May God who dances in creation,
Who embraces us with human love,
Who shakes our lives like thunder,
bless us and drive us out with power, Amen.*



Rebecca Thompson, a Londoner, arrived in Auckland with her family in 1998. A Christian since 1980, her local Anglican church is St Thomas, Kawakawa. Retired from teaching, Rebecca is now studying Philosophy and decorating God's Word on clay.



Dance into Worship in a service at All Saints Church, Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey.

SGM Launches New Website!

Visit www.sgm.org.nz

I'm VERY EXCITED to introduce our new website and its designer, Kathryn Overall, to you.

In recent years, there has been a growing feeling within workgroup that that it was time to up our game with the SGM website. In David Crawley's words he had, "taken it as far as he could as a well-intentioned amateur." We could see the value of bringing someone in with fresh energy and specific skills in this area. We knew Kathryn from her time in the Spiritual Directors Formation Programme and were aware of her creative gifts and work experience. The fact she knew the formation programme from the inside was ideal!

I want to sincerely thank David for his generous care of the website up till now, and say hello, welcome and thank you to Kathryn for taking our website forward.

Jane Wilkinson



A Note from Kathryn Overall

I consider it a privilege to be trusted by the SGM workgroup to create a new website for Spiritual Growth Ministries. When David Crawley first began a conversation with me about this project, I was in the prayerful process of redirecting the focus of my communications business towards serving individuals and organisations who offer soul care of various forms i.e. spiritual directors, coaches, therapists. What a gift to be given the opportunity to use my communications experience to help SGM support the growth of spiritual direction and contemplative Christian spirituality in Aotearoa!

As spiritual directors, we so naturally offer hospitality and manaakitanga to individuals when we meet with them in person. As a communications designer, I have the same conviction about offering an inviting, welcoming online presence. A website is our 'home' online, and is often the first touchpoint for someone who is being drawn to the contemplative stream. Our vision for the new SGM website was to create an inviting website that is visually appealing, grounded in this whenua, creates clear pathways, uses warm, inspiring language and features voices and faces that bring SGM's core offerings to life. I hope we have achieved that.

Inclusion of Te Reo Māori on the website, with images of our whenua, reflects the cultural awareness journey of SGM (and the contemplative community of Aotearoa). I'm grateful for the wisdom and gentleness of Vicki Roberts from the SGM Workgroup as my guide in this process. Thanks too, to the SGM-trained spiritual directors who braved the Omicron outbreak for our website photo shoot!

In the website design, I have relished the opportunity to highlight the treasure trove of Special Interest Projects (SIPs) and *Refresh* Journal archives by making these resources more visually appealing. Adding blog functionality makes it possible for individual articles and SIPs to be featured on the website and more easily shared on social media. I encourage you to reacquaint yourself with what is there and share resources that might light the way for others.

Contemplative spirituality is a taonga, something precious to be shared with others. My prayer is that this new website will be an encouragement to the contemplative community and attract new interest as the call of contemplative spirituality goes out to all corners of the church, and of Aotearoa.

Visit www.sgm.org.nz

Kathryn Overall is a spiritual director, coach, website creator and songwriter, hailing from Tauranga Moana. She deeply loves the contemplative stream and finds its flow in her garden, journal, nature walks and playing with her nieces. (www.kathrynoverall.com)



Carry the Light

Anna Johnstone

Jesus said, 'For a brief time still, the light is among you. Walk by the light you have so darkness doesn't destroy you. If you walk in darkness, you don't know where you are going. As you have the light, believe in the light. Then the light will be within you, and shining through your lives. You'll be children of light.' John 12:35,36

I remember back to early Living Way Learning Centre days when a lovely young woman from Papua New Guinea came to be part of us for six months

She taught us movements to a taped song called Carry the Light a call to share the love of Jesus with those who've never met him

We practised daily until we could do it perfectly and were ready to perform for the parents at our end-of-term presentation

As teacher of this small group of children aged 5 to 15 and tallest, I was in the back row of dancers and was fine until I saw the effect on our audience

Tears streamed from faces as the beauty and passion of the dance impacted them and tears filled my own eyes

It's a beautiful memory, Jesus my eyes filling again as I think of it with such clarity it could have been last night

Your light shone through those precious lives

May it continue to shine in them and in us all so that we carry your light in our world and show the treasure of your heart

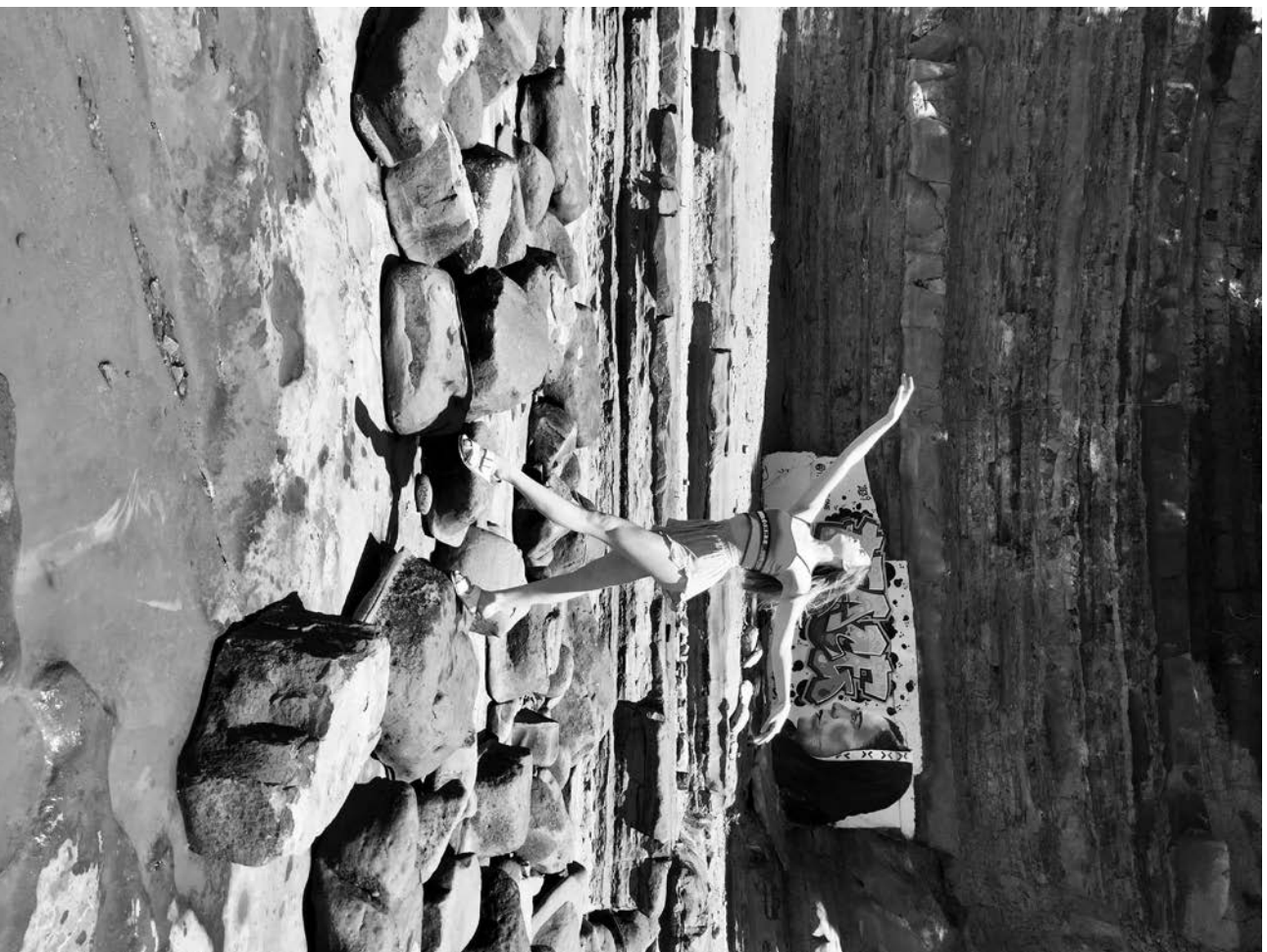


Photo - Kathy Dreyer of her dancer daughter, Rebecca.

Dancing with Dementia

Marilyn Wilkinson

My husband, Peter, and I live apart. This is not our choice but what is right for us at this time.

It was heart wrenching to realise that I could no longer care for Peter myself and to realise that we would not share the same bed, enjoy the same silence, have the same experiences in the same way that we had in the past. It felt as though life was unravelling and 20 years of deep companionship was ebbing away.

Really? No. There were surprises in store!

I don't visit Peter. I go to be with him. Two or three times a week we continue our dance of togetherness. Two or three times a week I join in the rhythm of his new life. I meet the angels who shower him with love and who dance with him in ways I was not able to. Two or three times a week we revel in each other's company and find new ways to share our lives.

Peter loves to go out. A blessing has been having time to picnic together. Off we go with a bounce in our step to sit watching people boating, walking, running, joining with them in a deep appreciation of the great outdoors. There is no rush. It's fun to watch the dance go on.

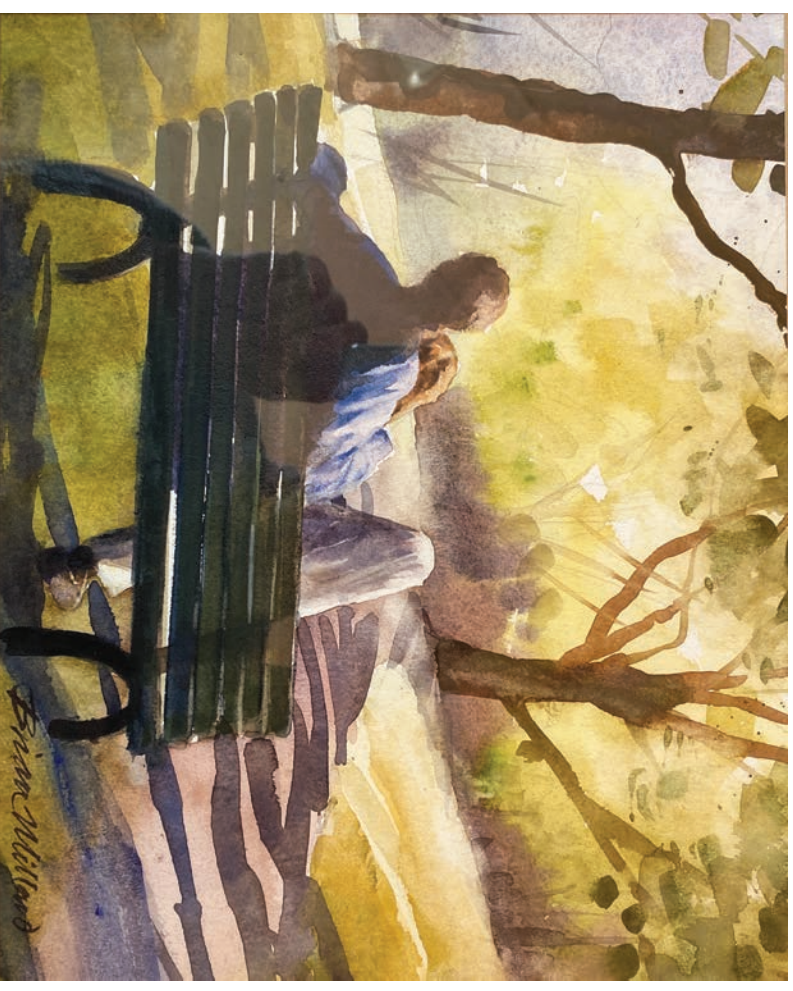
Yes, life is a dance if we let it be. Being in a rest home, not being able to do what we used to do, should not restrict the delight we can still have in life.

I say that Peter and I still dance in each other's hearts. Someone asked me if Peter remembers my visits. During the Covid lockdown, he did go downhill and the staff were worried. At that time, we knew of no way to call him and of course we were not visiting. When we connected once more, Peter's spirit lifted. Now I say that he may not remember my visits in his head but he remembers them in his heart. He is happy and at peace.

Recently, I had a health blip and was not able to be with Peter. We talked on the phone. When eventually I could visit, my spirits rose and I felt new. Only then I realised that we each need the other for our dance to be complete. Life is both giving and receiving.

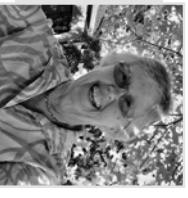
Worship is important for us both and I like nothing more than to be with Peter when the priest comes to offer the Eucharist. This is our deepest dance. This connects us to the Ultimate. This renews our spirit and allows us to focus on the essentials in life which are not physical or material. Sometimes the tears run down Peter's face. The Spirit has touched him.

Peter's career was in National Radio, mostly as an announcer with Concert FM. He is deeply musical and when not doing other things, he is happiest in his room letting classical music fill him and feed his soul. This passion is a wonderful gift. Never think that rest homes are places to avoid. They are filled with a myriad of angels all sharing their skills, singing and dancing a song of love as they build a caring community with each member seen as special.



Brian Millard, NZ Watercolourist

Marilyn Wilkinson's recent health problems have been enjoined with many blessings. More time for deep reflection, for writing & reading, for enjoyment of family & the outdoors. "Older age is not a time to endure but a time for which to give thanks."



SGM News

Jane Wilkinson - Convenor

Kia ora friends. Warm greetings to you. May the contemplative practices promoted in our SGM spaces, offer you sustaining connection with our God in the swirl of uncertainty that is happening around us at present.

Our new website is kicking off and we are *beyond happy* with what Kathryn Overall has produced. You'll see how it captures our Christian contemplative heart and reflects our fledging bicultural journey.

The formation programme continues well with steady numbers and creative adapting to distance learning when needed. Fran will also have led an Auckland retreat and organised a training week for Supervisors by the time this is read. Workgroup gratefully recognises Fran's talented leadership and David's capable assistance.

As Workgroup engages with *holy invitations* around culture and equity we enthusiastically welcome scholarship funding for future programme participants.

Adrienne, our administrator, would love to hear from you admin@sgm.org.nz

Hellos and goodbyes. I acknowledge the sad passing of Mike Riddell and Joy MacCormick who have been long-time friends of SGM. Mike authentically combined the prophetic and the contemplative. As too was Joy's grace and dignity as she faced her ageing. Both leave meaningful legacies.

And with considerable sadness, I'm saying goodbye from Workgroup where I have been involved for a number of years (nearly 20!). Trish O'Donnell is also stepping away and will be greatly missed. We both feel deeply privileged to have served on this board. Thank you Workgroup friends past and present, you are more precious than you know. Bruce Maden will become Convenor and I have every confidence in his abilities to guide things forward.

'The Dance' theme of *Refresh* is an inspired topic (thanks Anna) and a great metaphor for how we all do life. Oprah Winfrey states 'Every day brings a chance for you to draw in a breath, kick off your shoes, and dance'. Breath, freedom, movement are beautiful descriptors of prayer for a time such as this.

Mā te Atua



Jane Wilkinson lives in Wellington. She is the convenor of the SGM Workgroup, Chaplain at Wellington City Mission and a spiritual director.

SDFP Report

Fran Francis - Coordinator

This year the Spiritual Directors Formation Programme welcomed 2022 participants with kārangā and pōwhiri for the first time. Vicki Roberts (Ngā Ruahine/Te Atiawa) with a chorus of birdsong and gently falling rain, called our 2022 participants into the relationships and spaces where they will do a lot of growing. SGM is about forty years deep into a kaupapa of contemplative Christian spirituality but Te Ao Māori already has the language of this contemplative worldview so, the formation programme and SGM, with the help of our friends and advisers who are Tāngata Whenua, are hoping to grow in our understanding and outworking of this richness.

In this vein, Vietnamese American poet, essayist and novelist, Ocean Vuong, has some wonderful things to say about language and embodiment. He says, "the future is in our mouths" rather than in our hands. I love that. He goes on, "So I think, what happens if we alter our language? Where would our future be? Where will we grow towards...?"

I venture to suggest we grow towards one another. Altering our language and letting God, through our contemplative approach, do God's thing through opened hearts and minds is shaping the future of the SDFP. We are now joined by Māori, Chinese, Pasifika, and African people with a call to spiritual direction. Hallelujah!

We are delighted to welcome Alice Wood, Donald Scott, and Rachel Kitchens to our team of workshop facilitators. I take this opportunity to *tautoko* them. They have already brought so much to the training from their cultures, diverse language skills and experience of life and as directors. In other exciting news we will also be welcoming overseas students again in 2023 after a Covid-enforced hiatus.

Donations and sponsorships make an enormous difference to participants who have no access to funding and help us to offer this unique programme. We have some marvellous stories of provision from people just like you. If it occurs to you to give, then please do. I wouldn't be writing this to you now if someone hadn't been generous to me!

Thanks for all your support and prayers. Mā te Ātua koe e manaaki. Remember the future is in your mouth.



Fran Francis leads the Spiritual Directors Formation Programme and enjoys curating spaces in which people can encounter God. She is hugely excited, with her husband Vic, and whānau, to be welcoming her first grandchild in November.

Next time...

The Hope

A song keeps singing in my mind: *What the world needs now is love, sweet love.* I think that at this point in our lives, this point in our history, what the world desperately needs now, is hope, which is another word for love.

*Jesus walked - as God - into the places of
grief and brokenness and despair in our world and calls us to follow him there.
Jesus testified to a God who suffers with us and who breathes resurrection hope
into the most surprising of places. And Jesus sees us – really sees us and loves us
into life. How might we be part of that resurrection hope?*

Caleb Hardie

As God-lovers, we are in a unique position to offer hope, to hold hope for others. The Mystery of life waiting to be shared by those whose hearts are held in the heart of God with those whose hearts are empty of hope.

Possible areas of focus: The hope of our faith. The God of hope. Living as a hope-giver. Offering/holding hope for others/our fractured world.

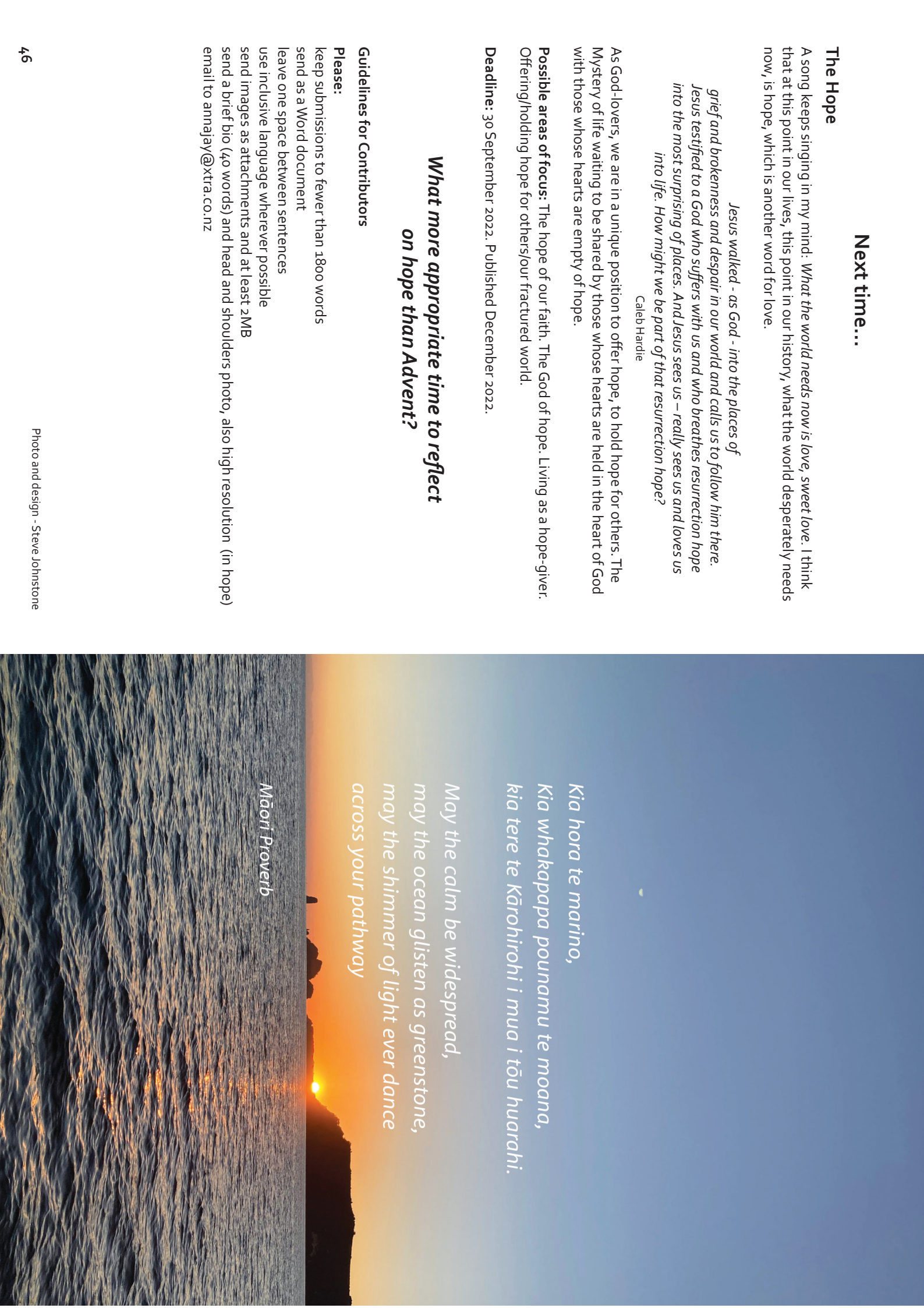
Deadline: 30 September 2022. Published December 2022.

What more appropriate time to reflect on hope than Advent?

Guidelines for Contributors

Please:

- keep submissions to fewer than 1800 words
- send as a Word document
- leave one space between sentences
- use inclusive language wherever possible
- send images as attachments and at least 2MB
- send a brief bio (40 words) and head and shoulders photo, also high resolution (in hope) email to annajay@xtra.co.nz



*Kia hora te marino,
Kia whakapapa pounamu te moana,
kia tere te Kārohirohi i mua i tōu huarahi.*

*May the calm be widespread,
may the ocean glisten as greenstone,
may the shimmer of light ever dance
across your pathway*

Māori Proverb

Resources

Moving with Mystery Dance Prayers DVD

The Monk Manifesto is a set of 8 principles for contemplative, creative, and compassionate living. It is the Rule of Life for the Holy Disorder of Dancing Monks community at Abbey of the Arts.

John Philip Newell:

Celtic scholar and writer talks about the Circle Dance of Jesus and his disciples at the Last Supper. [The Work Of The People - The Circle Dance](#)

Joyce Rupp:

The Talking Joy Podcast and read *The Cosmic Dance*. Also, *Invitation to the Dance*.

John O'Donohue:

Beauty, The Invisible Embrace, Chapter 5: The Joy of Shapes that Dance.

Daniel O'Leary:

Dancing to my death. This book was finished just before he died in January 2019.

Kathleen Rushton sm:

The Circle Dance in Jewish Thought / Torah Musings kprushton@gmail.com

Richard Rohr:

The Divine Dance

Eun Sophia Park:

An Asian Woman's Religious Journey with Thomas Merton: A Journey to the East

Carry the Light by Twila Paris @ 1989 Ariose Music <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qnsrjFCKYjw>

Room at the Table - Words and Music by Carrie Newcomer ©2014, Carrie Newcomer Music <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92OM5bdQ4N4>

Thanks to Other Contributors:

Steve Johnstone for designing the cover, page 29 - Seasons and page 47 - The Last Word, with his usual magic. <https://oldandnew.nz>

Janine Ross-Johnstone for her delightful image of Penelope on our cover <https://www.jphotographic.co.nz>

Holly, Penelope's Mum for being happy for her favourite photo to be used

Terry Stringer for being happy for us to feature his wonderful sculpture, *Dance to the Music of Time* and to photographer Tim Cuff for permission to use his image of it. tim@timcuff.com

Kathy Dreyer for the image of her lovely daughter, Rebecca - page 40. While dancing is still her passion, Rebecca, part of the Albany Presbyterian Church family since she was born, is now at University.

Robyn Kahukiwa for permission to use, as our centrespread, her engaging illustration of children dancing from Patricia Grace's book, *Watercress Tuna and the Children of Champion Street*, Puffin NZ, 2005

Brian Millard for permission to use his evocative watercolour - page 43. When I saw it I thought how beautifully it would go with Marilyn's moving words. I just had to buy it and love seeing it now on our wall.

*Every child has known God
Not the God of names
Not the God of don't
Not the God who ever does Anything weird
But the God who knows only 4 words
And keeps repeating them, saying:
"Come Dance with me, come dance".
Hafiz*

