

## Let it Be a Dance

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April 20, 2014

By Marcia Moore

### PRELUDE:

“I Could Have Danced All Night” Lerner and Lowe

Margie Hallmark

### GATHERING THE COMMUNITY

**OPENING WORDS/ CHALICE LIGHTING:** Good Morning, Welcome and Happy Easter. I'm Marcia Moore and I'll be leading the worship service today. Let's take a moment to acknowledge and praise the miracle of spring, the resurrections in life and the celebration of Easter. As I light the chalice I ask you to join me in Responsive Reading # 534 GLORIA.

### OPENING HYMN:

# 203 “All Creatures of the Earth and Sky”

Margie Hallmark

Please rise as you are able and willing.

**DEEPENING OUR COMMITMENT:** Please stand as you are able and willing to recite our covenant which appears in the order of service.

We join together as a spiritual community in common search of meaning and wonder through all stages of life. We pledge to support each other, our congregation and Unitarian Universalism with our abilities and resources. We honor ourselves, or relationships and each other with dignity, respect and compassion, always maintaining the common good.

**STORY FOR ALL AGES:** Happy Easter to all of you. Maybe you received some special treats since it is Easter Day that made you so happy that you almost felt like singing and dancing. Today I'm going to talk about dancing. How many of you have ever danced? What kind of dancing did you do? Have you ever heard of tap dancing? I'm going to read a story about the most famous tap dancer of all times, Bojangles. His real name was Bill Robinson and he lived from 1878 to 1949. He was such a wonderful tap dancer, that there has never been another to equal his ability. Bojangles made many people happy by dancing in shows, clubs and movies. He was very generous, sharing the money he made with less fortunate people. On May 25, 1989 ( Bojangles Birthday)

Congress declared this date as National Tap Dance Day in his honor.

This book is about him.

RAP A TAP TAP HERE'S BOJANGLES- THINK OF THAT!

By Leo and Diane Dillon

As you leave for your activity this morning we will sing you out "Go Now In Peace".

**JOYS AND CONCERNS:** This is a special time in our service when we have an opportunity to share our joys and concerns with each other. Should you wish to do that, please come forward and remove a stone from the bowl and place it in the the top section. This is a tradition borrowed from native Americans where the stones represent a joining of individual concerns or joys with those of others. You are welcome to share a brief description of your joy or concern or if you'd prefer not to verbalize it we will understand your need for support at this time.

**HYMN:** "SPIRIT OF LIFE" #123 in our hymnals and found in the Order of Service

**SHARING OUR RESOURCES:** Given the title of my sermon the Offertory Music composed by Irving Berlin hopefully puts you in the spirit of giving so that we can continue supporting this church in its efforts and services to us as well as to others in the greater community. All donations are gratefully appreciated. So, now is the time as Irving Berlin said in a song composed for a musical called "Follow the Fleet", "Let's Face the Music and Dance".

**MEDITATION:**

"Evening Prayer" Englebert Humperdink

Margie Hallmark

**SHARING THE MESSAGE:**

**LET IT BE A DANCE**

Dancing is something all of us have been exposed to or experienced in one way or another. Some of us truly enjoy dancing; getting up and moving to the rhythm of the music either with formal, learned steps or improvising. While others of us refuse and avoid any situations where we might be asked or required to dance. Think of those folks you may know who only danced at their wedding, reluctantly and because it was expected and haven't danced since. Often you'll hear these non-dancers saying as an old song you may have heard warns, "I won't dance, don't ask me."

I, on the other hand am "A Dancing Queen" like the title and subject of a disco era song composed by the musical group, Abba and performed in the movie and show "Mama Mia". When I hear dance music playing I just have to get up and start moving, alone or,

if I'm lucky with a partner.

Most recently I have been taking Belly Dancing and Country Western Line Dancing lesclasses. When I tell people I'm doing Belly Dancing I often get a raised eyebrow, a smile and a chuckle as a response. Undoubtedly the thought is that it's a dance of seduction as is often portrayed in movies or shows. This idea is reinforced by colorful, filmy skirted costumes trimmed with coins that jingle with the movements. Adding to the perception of the sensual nature of the dance, the costumes sometimes expose the midriff and the hips, rib and abdominal areas are active and the center of attention and focus although the whole body becomes involved in the dance. The term Belly Dancing was a translation from the French "danse du ventra" used to describe a for of Algerian Dance. Belly Dancing was introduced in the US during the Victorian Era in 1893 at the Chicago World's Fair and the word "Belly" titillated the prudish Victorian sensibilities and of course drew in large audiences.

Despite this somewhat racy reputation of Belly dancing the truth is it began in India over 5000 years ago and spread through the Middle East by Gypsy (Roma) migrations. In the Middle East it originally was a religious dance performed by priestesses in temples during fertility rituals as early as 1000 BC and appears in temple engravings in Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece.

Unlike Belly Dancing Western Country Line Dancing has no religious origins or connections. It is a much younger dance form beginning in US in the 1950's and reaching its heyday in the 1970's. But the two types of dances Belly Dancing and Line Dancing have similar steps and neither usually have a physical connection between the dancers. Trying to learn both of these types of dance forms lead me to think about dancing, in general – how it began and why we do it.

Dancing seems to be a ubiquitous activity occurring in most cultures and on every continent. Since it is springtime now and we're spending more time outdoors, we might also notice birds and other animals, as well as humans, engage in courtship efforts that often look like a dance with partners exchanging the lead.

Why do we dance? I'd like to suggest, because of its long history as a human activity, perhaps dancing has crept into our DNA and is part of our evolutionary adaptation. We may be meant to dance since all over the world so many engage in dancing. Dancers from disparate parts of the world may use similar or the same steps and movements without having been exposed to or influenced by each other when their dance was first choreographed.

No one knows exactly when dancing began but there is archeological evidence of its existence in 9,000 year old rock shelter paintings in India and Egyptian tomb paintings

with dancing figures from 3300 BC. It has been an important part of ceremony, rituals, celebrations and entertainment since before the birth of the earliest human civilizations.

Although throughout history sacred dancing has been done in religious ceremonies and rituals, and even today is used as part of spiritual or meditative rituals some religions ban it. They call dancing evil, the devil's work, shameful or sinful and outlaw it, commanding their followers not to engage in such activity. Yet dancing persists and flourishes despite efforts to suppress or prohibit it.

Why do dance? Because it provides us with a way to express ourselves. Before the production of written languages, structured dance was one of the methods of passing stories down from generation to generation. This reason to dance still exists in Native American and other cultures.

Dancing can also be a part of an exercise regimen offering low impact weight bearing exercise suitable for all ages. Some of you may remember learning Square Dancing in elementary or junior high as part of gym class.

Dancing offers opportunities to make friends and connect with others, socially. Frequently, dancing brings joy or occurs during joyful occasions like weddings.

Dancing is also a form of entertainment, whether you are watching it being done, by others, doing it yourself or dancing with a partner. We've become used to seeing dancing being done on nearly a daily basis when we watch the popular "Dancing With the Stars" program on TV or see it being done on "You Tube" or other internet sites . Dancing is fun.

Dancing has invaded the way we use language. We've become accustomed to using the words dance and dancing in metaphors and analogies which make comparisons and attempt to explain or describe many of our life's experiences and connections. I'd like to describe a few dance metaphors and analogies to explain what I mean.

For example, conversation is a dance. Sometimes we lead, sometimes we follow or pause to wait for the other person to take the next step or lead us in another direction.

Relationships are dances. The steps, rhythms and movements are created through our efforts to connect with each other. In dancing and relationships we try to make the rhythms and steps flow but as we've all experienced, sometimes they clash. As with dancing if the rhythms and music of the relationship are out of step, changing the music, changing the partner or changing both may be the best course of action.

Aging is a dance is another metaphor. In youth our dancing is exuberant, wild, risky



