



Liturgical Dance

compiled by Terri Williams

What is Liturgical Dance? Giving definition to this term could create as many definitions as there are denominations. Liturgical Dance defined literally becomes dancing the Liturgy, or the Word of God. Although dancing has historically played a significant role in the world's religions, Liturgical Dance refers specifically to the Christian religion.

With this literal translation, how then does the Christian dancer define Liturgical Dance in practical terms? At its most basic, this form of dancing could simply be taking stock of one's music and choreography. A dancer may choose to dance to music that has lyrics that are about God or a specific biblical theme. In inventorying one's chosen movements, a conscious decision made in foregoing imitation of the latest music video while incorporating a style that interprets the lyrics or them of the music.

Liturgical Dance can be literal or symbolic. Christian dancers have incorporated sign language into their choreography. Symbolic gestures, such as the bowing of the head or raising one's arms, might be a part of the dance. A dance may have neither of these and simply flow from the heart of the dancer and/or choreographer.

A dance could be used as a part of a worship service, for instance, incorporating it into the presentation of the elements of the Lord's Supper or integrating dance with the Celebratory or Worship Songs. Liturgical dance may be theatrical in nature, acting out a biblical scene or communicating Forgiveness to an audience. Perhaps, like a ballet, a story may unfold.

Liturgical Dance may reflect many different styles of dance. Ballet, modern and jazz may be used. A dance might have an ethnic influence. Elements of traditional folk dance, such as circle or line dancing, could become part of the dance.

As much as there is variety in Liturgical Dance, there are a few basic elements that help to define it. The Liturgical Dance has one of two purposes, worshipping God or communicating to others the liturgy, the Word of God. In both instances the Creator rather than the creation (the dancer) becomes the focus of and purpose for the dance. All gifts are from God. Liturgical dance is a beautiful and glorious way to use God's gift of dance to return to Him in sacrificial giving (worship) or to share God's Word with others.