

Westminster celebrates ten years of sacred dance ministry

By Sandy Jones, Director of Sacred Dance

Ten years ago this month Westminster dancers presented their first dance in worship at Westminster. The event was the fulfillment of a vision I had as a teenager participating in sacred dance at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Livonia.

I was uncertain how this vision would be realized until I came to Westminster. When Greg and I joined the church in the spring of 1996, Melissa Anne (May) Rogers, the associate pastor at the time, approached me. She'd heard I'd been involved in sacred dance in the past and was interested in starting a dance group here. I was excited at the prospect, yet a little fearful at the same time. We met several times to discuss different aspects of dance. I arranged for a dance group from St. Paul's to present a dance on world communion Sunday in the fall of 1997, and Melissa Anne spoke to Westminster youths about joining the new dance ministry. In January 1997 we had our first rehearsal and I began teaching a group of five young ladies the very first sacred dance I had ever choreographed. Talk about a leap of faith!

For many years the dance group stayed constant at about six members. Though I saw the beginnings of growth, I felt God calling me to rest for a year after Greg and I had our second child. It was at that time that Angela and Beca Torres-Kutkuhn stepped – if not leaped – forward to lead the ministry in the fall of 2003. I knew the ministry would be in good hands, especially since Beca had already been involved for a couple of years as a dancer and both of them have significant musical backgrounds.

I now know why God wanted me to take a rest as the dance ministry has grown by leaps and bounds in the past couple of years. We now have three groups with a total of twenty dancers and I see more growth in the future. When I think of Angela and Beca, the following scripture comes to mind: "Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help . . . Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken." (Ecclesiastes 4:9–10, 12 [NLT]) I am so thankful for Angela and Beca as we lead the dance ministry together.

Together we are even more thankful for the wonderful privilege of bringing glory to God's name and ministering to others through dance. Westminster member Vern Terpstra said, "Dancing, like singing,

is a way of expressing our worship, as David noted in the Psalms. We're happy to have the different dance groups enrich our worship services." Upon hearing the news of our ten year anniversary, Jill Fairchild shared, "You have good reason to celebrate! Your ministry has been a wonderful addition to our community – at Westminster and beyond. You and the dancers enhance our celebration of worship in many ways – visually, rhythmically, musically, sensually. You add dynamics that no other group can offer, and you do it so tastefully and respectfully." Allen Borton shared, "I think that when the sacred dance program started at Westminster, none of us quite knew what to expect. But it has become a valued part of our worship, highly edifying to both the congregation and (I suspect) the dancers. God be praised!"

When I think of the dance ministry, the parable of the mustard seed comes to my mind. "Again he said, 'What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.'" (Mark 4:30–32 [NIV]) More than twenty years ago the seed was planted. Over the years I tilled and watered the soil and pulled weeds. Now I am blessed to be resting under the outstretched branches of a lovely plant as I listen to and watch the beautiful birds.

Please join us in celebrating ten years of sacred dance at Westminster at the special dance-themed Good News at 6:00 worship service on May 6. An offering will be received to benefit Arbor Hospice.

More photos are on page 4 – and at www.westpresaz.org/programs/dance.html.



