



949 WEST 49TH AVENUE

*meeting on unceded, traditional xʷməθkwəy̓əm
(Musqueam) land*



Dance in Colour © Derek Lamarque) used with permission

Dancing the Living Tradition

Mairy Beam and Mary Bennett

August 20, 2017

Tel: 604-261-7204 info@vancouverunitarians.ca

[Facebook.com/vancouverunitarians.ca](https://www.facebook.com/vancouverunitarians.ca)

Email: info@vancouverunitarians.ca



Our Vision

Because we envision a more compassionate world, we seek to deepen our spiritual and religious lives, grow and enrich our congregation, and advocate for love and justice.



Living Our Vision

As Unitarians, we are dedicated to spiritual growth, social justice, and reverence for nature and all life. We embody these values through worship, ethical action, artistic expression, and religious education for all ages that aim to connect hearts, heads, and hands. Our congregation welcomes all ages, orientations, abilities, and identities in our joyous search for meaning.

Celebration of Worship

August 20, 2017

Dancing the Living Tradition

Have you noticed the invitations to sacred circle dancing and wondered what it's all about? Mairy and Mary will share how circle dance became an important part of their spiritual journey. A group of Unitarians will demonstrate some of the dances (to songs from Singing the Living Tradition hymnal) and during the service, you'll be invited to sing or dance or tape your toes as we repeat the songs and dance with you in the aisles. Our mantra in circle dance is: There are no wrong steps, only variations. All variations are welcome.

We'll share why we do it, a bit of the history and culture and then we'll invite you to join us (or observe) several dances choreographed for Unitarian songs.

If you'd like to see what it looks like and see a list of Unitarian songs that "have a good beat and you can dance to them" check out Mary Bennett's blog at sacredcircledance.wordpress.com

Prelude: Eric Wyness, Pianist, and Nicola Hamilton, Soloist, with Circle Dancers

Introit #188 Come, Come, Whoever You Are (choreographed by Karen Bartlett and Mary Bennett)

Opening Words and Kindling the Chalice Flame Words by Rumi; (read by Way Kent)

Greeting Our Neighbours

Opening Hymn #311 Let It Be a Dance (choreographed by Corinne Chepil)

Story for all Ages: **Elephants Cannot Dance** by Mo Willems (read by Mairy Beam)

Children's Recessional: Go now in peace, go now in peace, may the spirit of love surround you, everywhere, everywhere you may go

Welcome and Announcements

Reading from the Book of Celebrations and Concerns

Offering: We deeply appreciate your presence here, your offerings and the gifts you share.

Song #1051 We Are (dance adapted by Darlene Rainbow from Eno Sagrado choreographed by Stefan Freedman)

Meditation Reading: T.S. Eliot (read by Way Kent)

Silence, Song and Dance #352 Find a Stillness (choreographed by Frances Schofield)

Reflection **Community** Mairy Beam

Song #1064 Blue Boat Home (dance steps Winds on the Tor choreographed by Glastonbury Circle)

Reflection **Wholeness** Mary Bennett

Closing Song #346 and Dance: Come Sing a Song With Me (The Unitarian Shuffle)

Please join us in the outside aisles to dance together.

Closing Words: William W. Purkey (read by Way Kent)

Extinguishing the Chalice Flame and Valediction

Carry the flame of peace and love, until we meet again.

Opening words

Whoever you may be, come
Even though you may be
An infidel, a pagan, or a fire-worshipper, come
Our brotherhood is not one of despair
Even though you have broken
Your vows of repentance a hundred times, come.

Rumi

Words for Meditation

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.

T.S. Eliot

Closing words

You've gotta dance like there's nobody watching,
Love like you'll never be hurt,
Sing like there's nobody listening,
And live like it's heaven on earth.

William W. Purkey

Dance is the only art of which we ourselves are the stuff of which it is made.

Ted Shawn

Thank you to all the circle dancers who joined in, including:

Mairy Beam, Mary Bennett, Noreen Campbell, Cindy Cashin, Jennifer Getsinger,
Leslie Kemp, Jane Kinegal, Katherine Roback, Frances Schofield, Cathy Sevcik.

On Community

Mairy Beam

It was a time in my life when the black dog was nipping at my heels constantly. I felt like I was untethered – not anchored by friends, family or community. Desperately unhappy. Someone suggested I try the Unitarian Church, so I started attending Toronto First. I enjoyed the services but coffee hour was painful. No one talked to me. I thought, “Why would anyone want to talk with me; I’m under such a dark cloud.”

I was surprised and gratified when Donna Morrison-Reed gave a sermon entitled Blue Christmas where she acknowledged that many people struggle with Christmas. It has always been a particularly difficult time for me. Mark Morrison-Reed, her husband and co-minister, offered to meet with anyone who was struggling. I was so excited, and very apprehensive.

On the designated night I drove to the church and, shaking with nerves, I went to the front door only to find it locked. I could hear voices inside but couldn’t get in. A recurring theme in my life. I went back to the car but could not face going home. I waited a few minutes and tried again. Same thing. On the third try, Donna happened to be walking by and let me in.

One other woman attended the session. Her story was much sadder than mine. Mark didn’t do much other than listen but it was a turning point for me. Though I continued to find coffee hour very difficult, the Religious Education program became a refuge for me. It was easier to relate to the kids. This led me to go to Unicamp, the camp outside of Toronto owned by Unitarians, the next summer. There I discovered Sacred Circle Dancing. It felt like coming home. I started attending the weekly dances at a United Church in downtown Toronto.

It was through circle dancing that I learned how to be with other people. Holding hands in a circle – all connected, no hierarchy. People taking turns teaching dances. Being told it was OK to make mistakes. In fact that there were no mistakes, only “variations”. At first I was comparing myself to others all the time. “I’m better than that one,” I’d think, and then immediately make a mistake, or variation. I learned humility. I learned that it was not necessary to be perfect. Even the facilitators made “variations”.

And the spirit of the dancers was a revelation to me. There was no pressure to do more. The motto was “give what you can joyfully give”. Leadership was shared. And people found so much joy in the dance.

I am a person who is very much in my head. I majored in math and computer science. I worked as a computer programmer and systems analyst. It was such a relief to get out of my head, and into my body, to turn off the chattering, the anxiety and just be.

With the lessons I learned from the dance, I was able, finally, to be present and make connections at Toronto First. I was able to find close friends there, for the first time in my life. Now I was a member of two interwoven communities – sacred circle dance and the Unitarian church. Being grounded in community gave me a foundation that helped me to reconnect with family members, and form a long term relationship.

When my partner, Martha, and I decided to move to Vancouver to be close to our children and grandchildren, I was glad that there was a Unitarian church and an active sacred circle dance community. I didn't realize until I got here that the two were very much entwined. The move was a big one for me, and I am so grateful to have found friends and community in this church and in the dance.

I have told you how I have found sacred circle dance extremely helpful for me to be present in my body and as well as in my head, and to feel connected to others in a meaningful way. But, where does the "sacred" come in?

I believe that the sacred is to be found in relationships – in relationships with one another and with other beings in the natural world. Martin Buber was a prominent twentieth century philosopher, religious thinker, political activist and educator. He talked of the "I – thou" relationship -- "a relationship that stresses the mutual, holistic existence of two beings. It is a concrete encounter, because these beings meet one another in their authentic existence, without any qualification or objectification of one another."

Buber stressed that an "I – thou" relationship lacks any composition (e.g. structure) and communicates no content (e.g. information)." You could say that dance doesn't qualify for such a relationship because there is structure in the dance steps, but sometimes you can get so caught up in the music and the dance that you are not thinking of anything at all. It is moments like these that I feel I'm closest to being in an "I – thou" relationship with the other dancers. And when we are dancing outside, surrounded by trees, it feels to me like the relationship extends to the trees.

Buber argued that an "I – thou" relationship with anything or anyone connects in some way with the eternal relation to God. Or the divine mystery. Or, as I like to say, to Mother Earth. That is how I describe the sacredness in sacred circle dancing. Others will tell you a somewhat different story. Like Unitarians, we do not hold to a single path.

The sacredness does not preclude having fun. Some dances are high energy and some meditative. We dance to songs created very recently, such as "We Are Circling" from Buffy Sainte-Marie, as well as traditional music from many cultures. If your favourite piece of music has not yet been choreographed, we can probably create a dance for it.

The dancing and the dance community bring me much joy. More than that, it is a major component of my spiritual life. I think it is especially good for those who are very much in their heads or who think they have two left feet.

If this at all sounds appealing to you, I hope that you will join us in one of the monthly dance events happening here.

Mairy Beam first discovered circle dancing in Toronto and was glad to find there was an active community here at UCV when she moved here recently.

On Wholeness

Mary Bennett

Did you know that there is actually a name for the fear of dancing? It's called chorophobia. We chorophobes feel anxiety when dancing or being invited to dance; sometimes even when watching others dance or hearing people talk about dancing.

An example: Some years ago I was out with a group of colleagues. We were relaxing at a nearby bar together when music started up. I noticed then that there was a small dance floor in front of the band. I could feel my breathing go shallow, my heart start beating faster; a clammy sweat broke out on the back of my neck. And... I began to plot a swift getaway. But I wasn't swift enough.

The man sitting next to me jumped up, grabbed my hand and said: "Shall we dance?" Obviously he expected me to follow him onto the dance floor.

"No, um. Thanks," I said. "Actually I've got to get going. But thanks for asking," I added.

A few days later, he approached me and said he was surprised that I wouldn't dance with him.

I decided to be honest and said: "Well, I've never been comfortable dancing." (I could feel the breath, the heart, the sweat come over me as I confessed this.)

"Oh, really!?" He exclaimed. "If I had known that was all it was, I would have just pulled you out on to the dance floor with me."

Yikes! I expect you can imagine that I was not going to let that happen!

There's a charming song in a 1935 movie with Fred Astaire the words go like this:

I won't dance. Don't ask me.

I won't dance. Why should I?

I won't dance. How could I? .

My heart won't let my feet do things they want to do.

In my case it would be more accurate to say, "My *brain*—my very active brain—won't let my feet do things they want to do!"

But now and again over the years, I would think: "If only I could get past my anxiety, I think I would enjoy dancing."

Deciding to think of this as a phobia actually helped me to deal with it.

If you Google, “How do you get over a phobia?” You find: “The most effective way to overcome a phobia is by gradually and repeatedly exposing yourself to what you fear in a safe and controlled way.”

And that’s exactly what sacred circle dancing has been for me: A safe and controlled way to expose myself to dancing.

And although we say there are no wrong steps, I *like* that there are structured steps. And they’re always taught or reviewed just before every dance.

Another way I’ve looked at my, let’s call it a hesitation or reluctance rather than fear of dancing is through the lens of Carl Jung’s model of psychological types made popular as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.

Jung says we have four mental functions: thinking, feeling, sensation and intuition. Of these, one function comes naturally and easily to us—and so we tend to use it a lot and therefore get good at it. The auxiliary or second-best also operates well and often supports the primary or dominant function.

Then there’s the third function—not so good... and the fourth function: often called the inferior function. We can feel awkward, clumsy, out of control when life calls on us to use these functions. So of course we often avoid doing things requiring them and they get pushed deeper and deeper into our shadow; sometimes to jump out and scare us at inopportune times.

In Unitarian circles I’m usually not the only one in the room who scores highly on what Jung calls Intuition—the function that fuels our imagination. Intuitive dominant people focus more easily on ideas and on what *could* be rather than what *is*. It’s like we have a wide-angle lens on everything because we’re looking for patterns and possibilities and don’t mind if the details are fuzzy. The opposite of what Jung called Intuition is Sensation—taking in information through the five senses, a rather useful function for something like, say, dancing! And for those with Intuition as dominant; sensation is the inferior function.

Developing one’s inferior function can be seen as something of a spiritual path leading, we hope, to a greater degree of balance, harmony and wholeness.

Some years ago the circle dancers here were planning the first weekend retreat at Bowen Island. An entire weekend of dancing from dawn till late in the evening sounded like a bit much for me but I signed up anyways. But then at our regular

circle dance evening, it was announced that it would be a collaborative weekend: that each of us would teach at least one dance.

At the end of the evening, I went up to the organizer and said that I wouldn't be attending the retreat after all. When asked why, I blubbered out: "I didn't know everyone had to teach a dance. I can't do that."

So then I was embarrassed both about my lack of dancing skill and now at my emotional outburst. That's what being in the grip of the inferior function can look like.

(I did go after all. And I didn't teach any dances.)

And now I'd like to give the nod to professional therapy. Around the time of the story I told at the start of this talk about my reaction to being asked to dance, I was seeing a hypnotherapist.

I was newly separated and trying to work through all those issues that crop up at the end of a long-term relationship. I happened to share that story with the therapist. Near the end of our session, with me in a relaxed trance-like state, she said, "In a moment, I'm going to say a word and then in the future any time you hear that word you'll smile." Long pause. "The word is 'dance'."

So this leads me to invite you to get up and dance the Unitarian Shuffle with us.

My friends will demonstrate the steps: but remember: there are no wrong steps only variations.

(Dancers all do something different).

But you're all doing something different!! Ah, yes, that *is* the Unitarian way, isn't it?

Please do join us in song or dance!

Mary Bennett found circle dancing at an annual Women's Spirituality Celebration weekend event at Vancouver School of Theology and with others helped get regular dance circles going here at UCV.



IN CELEBRATION OF THE LIFE OF DANCER & PHOTOGRAPHER EDNA BULLOCK

WORDS by RIC MASTEN • CALLIGRAPHY by MARGARET KEIP

each a member of the UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH of the MONTEREY PENINSULA

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Sacred Circle Dancing at the Unitarian Church of Vancouver

1st Tuesdays and 2nd Mondays 7 – 9 pm

3rd Thursday 11 am—1 pm – Labyrinth, Art and Dance

Contact circledanceucv@gmail.com for more information