

“We should dance to the music that is playing.” During a recent episode of *Bones*, my favorite TV show, actor David Boreanz said to his wife: “We should dance to the music that is playing.” He said this in response to a cancer diagnosis for one of their young interns. As they broke the news of his diagnosis to the intern, David and his wife danced to the music of compassion and encouragement, and as they pondered what this meant they danced to the music of appreciation for life. I felt his words and their dance reach into my heart. They called me deeper into life’s possibilities even when facing difficult situations.

I believe these words reflect the gospel invitation Jesus offers each of us today. When Jesus walked the earth, he moved to a compelling life-dance that drew others to follow and respond to the call deep within. His wisdom teachings, earthy compassionate healings, and willingness to fully embrace his humanity was a dance many could not resist following. To answer Jesus’ invitation now, we need to hear the call and then act on it. In other words hear the music that’s playing and then dance to it. This music takes us deeper than roles, work, ministries, and activities. For sure we respond through these experiences, but the call and the action go much deeper. This is about the deepest longings of our heart. Joan Chittister speaks of this in her book *Following the Path*. She relates a story from the Hasidic Masters where the disciple asks how he is to know what work he is to do. Ultimately the Master answers him this way: “Search for the deepest inclination of your heart and follow it.” (pp. 187-88) To explore these inclinations and longings, I’d like to talk about two different kinds of dances, one with a focus on connection and the other on presence.

1st the jitterbug—a lively, flowing, happy dance with many variations. This dance was made for Bill Haley and the Comets! When jitterbugging, we are strongly connected with our dance partner. Is our call to connect? If we’re babysitting our grandchildren, nieces, nephews,

or others, we are to watch them and take good care of them. Yet if we go deeper, our real call is to connect, for us to get to know and appreciate who they are and them to know us. This past week those of us who went walking in the snow, either by ourselves or with friends and family, heard the crisp crunch beneath our feet. Although this was invigorating exercise, it really was a chance to connect with nature, with other people, and with our inner spirit. Last week Joyce Tannian spoke to our community about her work with *Water is Life Kenya*. Through her leadership and technical expertise she has provided many people with more accessible water; as a result they are able to spend more time together and do other important things. In effect she and her work have allowed them to connect in many significant ways. Is our deepest longing to connect? Is that God's call to our heart? If so, then let's dance by connecting with intentionality in whatever life experience we're in.

Let's consider another style of dance, a slow dance to music that invites us into tenderness, intimacy, and reflection. When we're slow dancing, it's all about presence, *being with* the person in that moment. Here are a couple illustrations of a slow dance in real life.

Today Arlene is our music minister. On the surface she needs to hit the right notes and choose songs we can sing. But there's something deeper that forms the heart of her ministry. Her call is really to invite us, through her music, into God's presence. Whether it was through her stirring instrumental of *Silent Night* or the lively community singing of *We Are Called*, we have experienced God in many musical moments. Thanks, Arlene, for dancing to the music of Presence, so that we may experience the divine dance within and among us.

Another slow dance example is an experience my daughter Dayna had as an Intensive Care Nurse. As an ICU nurse, she is charged with providing highly skilled care for seriously ill patients, but her call is more than that. She recently took care of a 48 year-old woman for 3

nights, and when she left, the woman was in stable condition. Unfortunately about 4 hours later the woman died. Dayna was greatly impacted by this woman and her loving family—her husband and 2 children. She was deeply saddened for the family and was so sorry they couldn't save her life. Dayna and I spoke of the great power we have as human beings to heal and save lives and yet how at times we are powerless to heal and save lives. She is in a place that holds this tension in the deepest of ways, a profound place where life and death come together. God, the Ground of all Being, the Source of all Life, is there in both our power and powerlessness, never leaving us but working in and through us to bring life even in the face of death. Dayna through her presence was God to this family. Her loving, compassionate care embodied Life—God's Presence. In her sadness and powerlessness, Dayna danced to the music of life by sharing her gift of Presence.

There are many life experiences where God invites us to be present. If our deepest longing is to be present, let us hear its music and dance.

Whether you hear the jitterbug music of connection, the slow dance music of presence, the music of peace-making, bridge-building, inner freedom, playfulness, or something else, listen *deeply* for its call. Just as Peter and Andrew, James and John listened to Jesus and his call and followed him, we need to listen to our hearts and follow. One of my spiritual direction professors at Neumann University, Eileen Flanagan, was always calling us students to go deeper, to look at what was underneath our words. I urge you also to go deeper and hear the call of the full musical score within you.

As you walk through this week, I invite you to listen carefully to the song in your heart and the dance Jesus is inviting you into.

So put on your dancing shoes—and dance to the music that is playing.

Scripture Readings—3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time
Isaiah 8:23 – 9:3
1 Corinthians 1: 10-13, 17
Matthew 4: 12-23