



# ICDF Networks

*January 2020*

## Networks for Social Concern and Missions



The photo above shows the ancient city of Corinth and is probably best known for Paul's letters written to the Christians living there. It is a reminder to us of his travels as a missionary spreading the 'good news' to the nations and of our mandate to be light and salt to this world.

# Creative Arts and Social Concern

## Dancing With Social Responsibility ... the birth of "Chronicles"

As far I can remember my parents always showed concern for the vulnerable and less fortunate in their neck of the woods. We were not financially wealthy to have excess over and above our daily bread. Yet, my siblings and I frequently witnessed our parents stretch the portion they had to help others not suffer from lack. We were also often directed by our parents to serve our community with our talents. I can't say for certain that we were happy to be volunteered by our parents to perform at every wedding or funeral in the community. That which was certain, however, was that my parents modelled a Christian faith that danced with social action and concern for the poor and needy, teaching us as children that helping to improve the well-being of others was equally important and valuable as taking care of ourselves.

Throughout the gospels we read of Jesus walking the way of compassion, purposefully seeking out those in need and addressing those needs beyond our human expectations. He was very visible and active on the road of social action as he walked on earth calling out the injustices in the society, including poverty, discrimination, marginalization and oppression that were antithetical to His Kingdom values and principles. Through multiple parables such as the Samaritan woman at the well, the healing of the lepers, the woman with the issue of blood, the woman caught in adultery, the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus modelled evangelism and social action as fundamentally connected, not separate or opposing aspects of being about His Father's business on earth.

Schooled by my parents and Jesus, as a dance artist, I have often sought to engage and align my faith, and artistic work in transforming and advancing the welfare of people and communities spiritually and practically. In the Western Cape, our Christian Dance Fellowship of South Africa (CDFSA) membership is predominantly women and women from varied socio-economic backgrounds. This has provided us with access to diverse communities and opened up new opportunities to make the ministry of dance relevant in socially responsive ways as well as evangelically.



*Photo: From the production "Chronicles"*

The year 2019 was a significant year for women in South Africa as the scourge of violence against women and children was brought to the spotlight and being given due and long-needed attention. According to the grim statistics more than one in five South African women experience physical violence, worsening to one in three in low-income areas. To only host dance technique workshops was not sufficient at this time. As a committee of Christian women, all affected by gender-based violence in some way, we felt that we needed to do more. We needed to dig deeper within and activate our God-given socially conscious DNA to care for our communities in more relevant ways at this time.

CDFSA Western Cape members took to the streets with other women, men, children, communities and organisations in both public marches and prayer gatherings around the city of Cape Town to take a stance against the menacing gender-based violence in the country. The physical, emotional and mental weight of gender-based violence on the nation's women and their families, regardless of their faith and socio-economic backgrounds, was made visible in the trending slogans #enough, #metoo, #Just NO!, #AmInext? As Jesus himself was an activist and advocate for others, we asked Him in prayer, "What else can we do to bring His perspective to bear on the current situation?"

Our hearts were further stirred to create a theatrical production that would communicate the Father's heart towards women and children. We got into social theatre action using the best resources we had, our bodies, dance, our faith and each other, to add our Christian perspective to the national conversations on gender-based violence. Dancers from the CDFSA Western Cape collaborated with a dance film maker, a visual artist and the Theatre Arts Administration Collective to create and stage an interdisciplinary community-based dance theatre work themed "Chronicles". The theatrical work was envisioned as a love letter from God to his precious feminine creations. Artistically, "Chronicles" interwove present events concerning women in our country with the historic, albeit timeless, stories of women in the Bible who had significant encounters with Jesus as their Saviour and Advocate. In a dinner theatre fashion, those in attendance fellowshiped with each other prior to the show by sharing a meal together and then proceeded to the annexed theatre for the forty minutes production. From the feedback given, "Chronicles" was a powerful and moving work that allowed audience members to heal, feel hope and be emboldened in Christ to fight for their purposeful existence and that of others. It also inspired the artists who participated in it to rise to the call of social responsibility through their arts and particularly for the dancers, to see their ministry in dance and social responsibility as one single ministry and not two separate entities.



*Photo: From the production "Chronicles"*

"Chronicles" was staged on December 7, 2019 during the international campaign period of 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, until 10 December, Human Rights Day). Authentic Christian social responsibility will always involve practical care for individual and families as exemplified by Jesus and the apostles (Matthew 25:31-45; Acts 6:1-7). James 2:15 tells us, 'If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?' We therefore, not only added our embodied voices to the national discourse on the plight of women and gender-based violence in the nation through the production, but further donated the proceeds to the 'Isidima' project of the Christian Non-profit Organisation SALT, that centres on assisting women and vulnerable children in local communities. A monetary gift that was very much appreciated by the NPO.

It was a satisfying and rejuvenating way to end the year together as a unified community of women artists serving and caring for other communities of women in step with our Saviour's mission. Christian social action is fundamentally motivated by the Lord Jesus Christ, the foundation of our life and faith and the One who enables us with strength and grace to both proclaim and demonstrate His gospel. To dance with social responsibility in Christ is, manipulating the words of Caribbean scholar the late Professor Rex Nettleford (1993), an inward stretch, *upward* (my addition) and outward reach.

*Lisa Wilson*

**Nettleford, R. (1993). *Inward Stretch, Outward Reach: A voice from the Caribbean*. London: MacMillan Caribbean.**

## on Tragedy and Adversity

*Our supporters who regularly receive the ICDF newsletters will know the poetry of Lucy Jarasius by now. We are blessed to be able to share with you her musings on ancestry and daily life, as well as a poem that speaks to our conscience as we take in these turbulent times of our history in making.*



*The photos above are of Elisbeta Maria Molnar and Kazimierz Radziejewski, Lucy's parents, taken in Dachau, Germany where they met and married after fleeing their homelands (Father from Poland and Mother from Hungarian-Romania) during the Holocaust years*

**M**y Eastern European parents, who met and married in Germany in the aftermath of the Second World War, migrated to the lands now called Australia as “displaced persons” (penniless refugees from the destruction of mid-20th Century Poland and Hungarian Romania). I am grateful that my faith-walk and life-story has been uniquely and deeply informed by many strong faith and friendship connections with people of Australia’s First Nations heritage who, by and large, are treated as “exiles” in their own lands. Themes of human suffering in my own ancestral story have seeped through some of my poetic musing and danceworks in recent years... as does my appreciation of many things Anabaptist, to which the peace-practising faith-tradition of the Quakers, a historic Christian denomination, is an expression. The teachings and traditions of Anabaptist-related “Peace Churches” are particularly relevant in the midst of our troubled world of violent international relations causing untold human and natural habitat devastation. As a “creative”, such teachings and experiences have blessed me with a kind of theological transformation as I try vocationally to keep in step with the Spirit throughout the oft-tangled tango of daily living. Life is not always a “happy dance”, but for me as a follower of The Way, it IS filled with passion, purpose and many moments of joyful play!

I don't think a January Newsletter would be too late to include the following poem inspired by the Hope of the Christmas Story, how it impacts personal story, and making connections through the universal story of human suffering!

Whether suffering is from natural disasters or from human tragedy, we need hope for healing and restoration, and Christmas/New Year, thankfully is an annual reminder of where our HOPE is best placed!

*Lucy Jarasius*

PS - You may have seen on international news broadcasts that significant areas of Eastern Australia are on fire, literally, as bushfires ravage the land! A recent project of the The New Thing group was to create a ‘prayformance’ presentation at a casual Fundraiser for the local church who partners with us... “**Send the Rain**” was a special 8 min production interceding for rain to fall for our desperately drought-stricken farming communities AND for the spiritual rain of Revival to sweep across our country’s peoples. These can be seen on YouTube at ....

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UcmE64U1\\_oU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UcmE64U1_oU)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzOX2sbWCCU>

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*We are searching for a person who has a passion for the arts and the difference that it can make in areas of social concern to take on the position of Network Leader. If you feel drawn to it please contact us at [icdfworld@gmail.com](mailto:icdfworld@gmail.com).*

## Blacktown Blues... a Christmas Carol of critical import

© Lucy Jarasius

O, I am just so hip  
O, critical these try-hard days

... I'm bleeding for Aleppo, for the Rohingya, for the heavily-trafficked human highway  
waving stop signs in my mind  
while I'm lounging comfortably in front of the telly  
that beams those tragic faces into the hallowed halls of my home in Quakers Hill  
decking my little candelabra tree with dire predictions

I've just spent money on Christmas presents for the family  
Funds which could have been e-directed to the people  
formerly mentioned,  
the heartbeaten-and-bled-for, previously said

Quakers Hill  
Do members of the religious Society of Friends still live here?  
Did they ever? Live here, I mean  
If they didn't, they left a legacy in their name  
Their reputation for peace and reconciliation  
For quiet, for plain oath-free speaking, and soul-searching meditation

Just think, think justly, but mostly just  
Imagine me trying to feel less try-hard and critical  
More peaceful and lyrical, more positively engaged with actions of peace-making miracle  
Mindful I didn't have an extended family for so long...  
Torn filial ties, snapped genealogical branches,  
cruelly stripped and culled  
exiled in their own lands  
Europe's storm-tossed 20th century vicious violence  
made that so

Justice denied to people who will die,  
was denied to people who did die, just wishing to live again peacefully, on their hill  
free as a bird  
lofty thoughts, imitating feather-light hope-heights, in their imaginations  
to escape the ISIS-cold horrors on the frozen emotion-dead sea,  
as refugee-laden vessels of sunken humanity just float by!  
Is that "just so", so just?

Just when my mystical inclination meets my activist imagination  
I must call for the Holy Spirit to referee,  
to advocate for Shalom and sanity  
as I sit in front of the telly  
telling tales, life-sized, tall, true and tragic,  
shaking me out of the home comfort zone  
leaving my quaking heart on a pre-Christmas Summer's day on that hill in Blacktown  
turning my mind cold like a Winter's war lost...

Blacktown... named for a people  
of torn filial ties, snapped genealogical branches,  
cruelly stripped and culled  
exiled in their own lands  
still largely justice-denied  
People who did die, and will die, just wishing to live again peacefully, on their hill... sigh!

O Christmas Tree,  
O Christmas Tree  
Your hope-laden branches comfort me!

# Network for Missions

Towards the end of last year we received the following news from Linda Wells that we are privileged to share with you all. To connect with Linda email her at ... [linda.wells@om.org](mailto:linda.wells@om.org)

What a world!! Such unrest, uncertainty anxiety and aggression. But these are probably just the “birth pangs” Jesus spoke of in Matt 24. “Fear not the end is not yet.” And so until the end.....we work “while it is still day. The night is coming when no man shall be able to work.”

The trip to Greece went well (apart from a 6.5 earthquake on the last day!!) We danced on the harbour of Piraeus and the Pastor who had NEVER seen dance in Evangelistic Outreach remarked that people had never stopped and listened before. Dance really attracts a crowd quickly so the Gospel can be shared.

We danced with refugees in a Camp in Malakasa, where thousands call a metal container with a front door, their “home.” Children were sweet the one moment and very fearful or aggressive the next. Dance brought fun and peace.

Finally we taught dance at a Refugee Cafe in Athens to women and children who have fled violent husbands and fathers. After the dancing we gave the women manicures and story time with colouring books for the children. I asked the boys particularly, if they were tired that their lives signified so much anger and aggression, or if they would like to choose to change atmospheres and hearts with strong joyful dance? (hip hop)

Please pray for healing of trauma, distress and displacement. One man I spoke to Ghulam, had had his identity stolen and will be separated forever from his wife and family in Sweden, unless God intervenes and “makes a way, where there seems to be no way.”

In April, I will travel to the Middle East to teach dance in worship to 700 workers from around the region. May we “Praise him in the dance.....and fetter enemy kings and nobles (invisible principalities and powers as in Eph 6 that are not flesh and blood.)” Psalm 149

Let me encourage you with some more wonderful stories ...

## Story 1:

A Muslim man in the States dreamed a dream of Mohammed, all Muslims long to....but he was surprised to see Mohammed kneeling at the feet of Jesus.

It felt like a holy dream not satanic. The next night he dreamt it again. The third night Jesus came and lifted him high above his town and showed him a Christian Church where people were praying during Ramadan (a 30 day fast for Muslims seeking God). Jesus told him to find the church and they would tell him about Himself. The man found the church, accepted Christ and is being discipled. We didn't know where the church was, and couldn't ratify the story..... until my husband was speaking to ten followers in the Middle East. He shared the story, and a young woman declared excitedly... “That's MY church!!!! In Washington!” That church now fully supports all she is doing to love Muslims after years of being quite indifferent.

## Story 2:

A friend of ours works in Turkey. She told us of a Muslim man who met a man in white on the train. This man told him to get off the train at the next stop and to turn left then right and enter a church. People there would teach him about Jesus. He did, they did and he is also following Jesus..... though the cost is GREAT!



*Linda Wells*