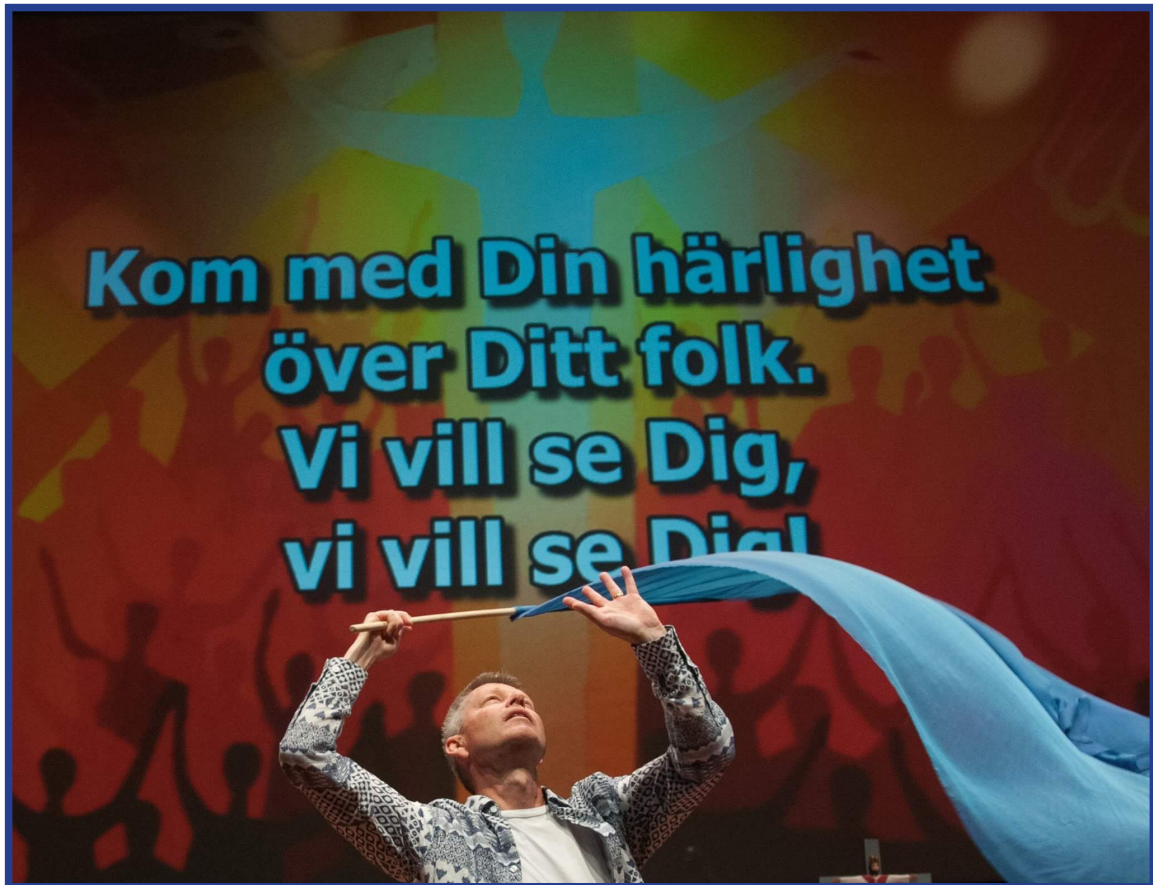




ICDF Networks

June 2020

Flags, Banners and other Dance Props



Come with Your sincerity over Your people. We want to see you.

Photo: John Egil Rage, Sweden. Photographer: Peter Asplund

Introducing Marie Bensley

In the early days of the ICDF when I was asked to head up the Flags and Banners network, dance and movement using flags and ribbons in worship was very limited. There were a very few people making and selling them.

I had been introduced to using flags by Andy Au in 1992 and I loved it! So I went to his training school and learnt as much as I could from him. I then started to be asked to teach in workshops myself and made some flags and wrote a couple of booklets to help people understand more.

In 1998 we were invited to go to a large Christian Resources Exhibition in Birmingham, England, and we were asked over and over again if we had any to sell!! We thought this might be an opportunity to show people a different way to dance in worship so I made several flags, my friend made some 3 metre streamers, Andrew printed off several copies of the booklet I had written on 'Moving in Praise with Flags' and at the end of the 3 days we had sold out with many orders for more!



That was the start of our Ministry of Kingdom Dance Resources. Since that time the use of flags, banners, streamers, and ribbons has flourished so much so that when I look at worship dance on Facebook and YouTube in 2020, the dance is mostly using beautiful flags of all shapes and sizes.

This has included our fellow leader Darlene West with her amazing prophetically given designs for her flags and streamers. She has been a great encouragement to us in the different way she operates in Canada. Darlene joined us in the network after the 2009 ICDF conference in Scotland, where we became friends as well as fellow dancers!

The creativity has exploded and the numbers of people making them here and around the world has risen exponentially! I am dependant for my information on the internet and the photos and videos that are posted. How widespread it is and how accepted it is I do not know. In the past Andrew and I taught and danced at many conferences and led many workshops. One year I counted over 75 workshops including Spring Harvest, Children's Ministry, and the CDFB, so we were helping to spread the joy of dancing and moving in Praise and Worship in many places. Sadly, because of family commitments and getting older, we are not able to continue at that pace but we do know our legacy is being carried on by those we taught.

Many dancers who use the worship flags are not trained in dance techniques and feel 'safe' with the emphasis on the beauty and movement of the flag and off themselves! This is why when holding a workshop it is good to use the word 'Movement' as well as 'Dance.' Some feel they are not 'dancers' but they might be persuaded they are 'Movers'!

Some churches may have a few flags available so any worshipper can pick one up and move freely without having to be in a 'dance group'. Although I have seen there are some churches in the USA and perhaps other countries who have a Banner/ Flag dance team, these dancers train and perform lovely choreographed dances giving a different dimension to the use of flags.

Because of that I do think, in some instances, there is a shift in the acceptance of flags and banners in worship. The 'shock! horror!' of a few years ago has subsided. That is not to say they are universally accepted. We still have reports of some of our dancers not being allowed to dance with flags and banners in their own church.

Is there a shift in the spiritual atmosphere?

At times I think there is, but then I realise that I work with and share a passion for movement and dance in praise and worship with likeminded people. In the wider church scene I think there is more acceptance of the use of flags, ribbons, streamers, etc but only if it is led by someone who is very passionate about dance! In churches where that person is missing.....there is no dance! I have heard of a church where someone who was interested in using flags in worship found a set of flags in a cupboard, on asking whose they were she was told, "Oh that lady left and no one has used them since!"

Perhaps some praise dance with flags is done with the children in their groups. In our town in the South West of England where we worship, there are very many churches of all denominations and I only know of two where movement and dance is done using flags and other props - our own Charismatic church and the other is an Anglican Church where another member of the CDFB worships. There is one other where 'dance' to them is the 'Charismatic hop' where many people just jump up and down on the spot, something that I do not resonate with at all! But they are entering into Praise as they know it.

Worship dance to me means a deep feeling from the depths of my spirit and soul that brings out many passionate movements in my body and my face!

I have seen a growth in the use of very large twirling colourful silk flags on the social media pages. This is exciting high praise but I do not often sense deep worship. Fortunately we are all entitled to our own favourite way to worship!

As I write this in May 2020 we are all in lockdown because of the corona virus and this has brought about some surprising results! Suddenly there is more dance on the internet as creative people are finding ways of connecting through videos and zoom dance meetings....who would have thought this possible even a few months ago. People from all over the country are connecting in zoom dance workshops, and even all over the world !

There has been a wonderful sung musical rendition of the Aaronic blessing in the UK..... 'The Lord Bless You and Keep You'. It has been viewed over 2 million times and several dance groups have now come together to put their interpretation on it as they dance to this stirring music with its ancient message of the love and protection of God. It is encouraging to see how many of the dancers are using flags, streamers and ribbons! One group of over 50 members included some from the ICDF and it was good to see some of the ICDF leadership dancing! Another group had over 200 dancers from CDFB and Movement in Worship sending in homemade videos and many were included in the completed version. I was very pleased to see that many of our 'Kingdom Dance Resources' flags, ribbons and streamers were being used by the dancers! These dances can be seen on YouTube.

We hope and pray that as we were encouraged these dances will be seen by many and there may be a growth in the interest to move and dance before the Lord.

Marie Bensley

*Joint-Leader for the ICDF Network for Flags and Banners
Photos pages 2-3, 5-7 provided by Marie Bensley*



A Prayer for Worshipers with Flags

A prophetic word



Photo: Darlene West

I love you so much and I have birthed you for such a time as this.

I birthed you as a Carrier of My Glory. Know that you ARE My instrument of praise. My heart soars when you worship Me with flags as an extension of your body. With My Spirit, you affect the atmosphere all around you.

To everything there is a season. This is your season to affect your community and region with My Spirit as you worship. Take hold of Me, beloved and let me pour myself into you in this season.

I have called you into a global anointing as you link arms with sister nations. I AM your common denominator. Uncommon, as I display Myself IN you and through you in the supernatural.

Just as My Banner over you is Love, as you receive My Love, you are able to love others out of the overflow, even as rivers of living water flow from the deepest parts of your being.

Remember, I have plans for you, plans for good and not for evil, plans to prosper you and to give you a Hope and a Future.

Come to me just as you are, even in your brokenness and I will heal you in My embrace, my beloved ones who I have called for such a time as this.

Darlene West

Joint-Leader for the ICDF Network for Flags and Banners

Flags are one creative way to worship that brings many into a freedom they've never experienced before. The Flags and Banners Network brings together those who already have an interest in this area, as well as those who simply want to learn more. To connect ...

Marie Bensley (UK): bensley@clara.net

Darlene West (Canada): info@westworksflags.ca

Note - Articles on pages 2-7 and page 10 are contributions from the ICDF Network for Flags and Banners. All other articles on flags, shofar and poi were independently sourced.

Using Fabric in Dance

During Lent 2020 (before lockdown) three of us experimented using fabric in dance. This was the first time that two of the group had used fabric in this way.

To begin with we looked at a Psalm which Anna Gilderson of UC Grace had included in her booklet “40 Day Dance & Movement Devotional”. As we each quietly meditated on the words, I then asked them to interpret into some movements. Initially this was without using props, and we took it in turn to talk through our own interpretation. The “raw moves” were based on our day’s activities which were all naturally very different.

Then we chose a piece of silk scarf and two large silk flags removed from their sticks. The freedom we felt using just the silk fabric without the flag sticks was part of the stepping out into the something new not experienced before.

Depiction of each of our interpretations was then done to music one by one – to the song “Mention of Your Name” sung by Marilyn Baker, taken from her CD “Joy of My Heart” (song written by Brian & Jenn Johnson, Bethel Music).

Person 1 – hanging washing on the line – large movements battling against the wind, dusting, swirling moves eventually lowering into a seated position, into which she wrapped herself in the scarf and held open her hands, and lifted her head, to be still to finish.

Person 2 – had been decorating that day so she painted big sweeping brush strokes on to the wall and then more detailed strokes onto the skirting board, and then held the fabric vertically and still to finish to represent her admiration of a good job done.

Person 3 – scrunched the flag material at a distance (with arms straight) around the shape of her head as she bent over, which depicted her busy brain in a spin. She then slowly calmed and put the whole piece of silk over her head and body, as if hiding underneath. She then lifted the material holding two corners of the square fabric to reveal her face looking upwards in an adoration pose.

I think this exercise stretched us in a new way, and we kept it brief for that reason, as we realised that the emphasis was ultimately on our Father God – his awe and loveliness that had guided us. I prayed that we would reflect on the exercise afterwards, with a hope that we could continue it another time.

Nicky Enticknap



A Visual Picture of the Spiritual

In Great Britain we do not use the word 'cloths' very much. We use these words:- material, billows, scarves, drapes. As the dancers became more adventurous so the use of different 'props' has come into the workshops. In my own church I have used a short gold billow with the children during the worship time and they loved it as they felt the 'wind of the Holy Spirit' as the billow moved up and down.

In our workshops the main aim, to use a phrase from Andy Au, is 'to give a visual picture of a spiritual truth' - for instance, using red material to dance/move before the cross can be very dynamic. We pulled a 30 metre length of red material from a cross in one dance we did, then people came and stood or knelt on it in prayer, and then we ministered to one another. We used blue and green 3 metre drapes as billows for people to run under as a sign of 'going through the waters'. It was very powerful to watch and to experience.

We have the wonderful 'New Jerusalem Billow' bought from the USA. It is approx. 4 mtrs square and has been used so dramatically at the end of our workshops. We know it is only beautifully painted silk material but there is an amazing sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit that comes upon us when we use it and this leads on to people ministering to each other. I have used Material and our large Jerusalem Billow in our worship service at church but it was a prepared choreographed dance not in free worship

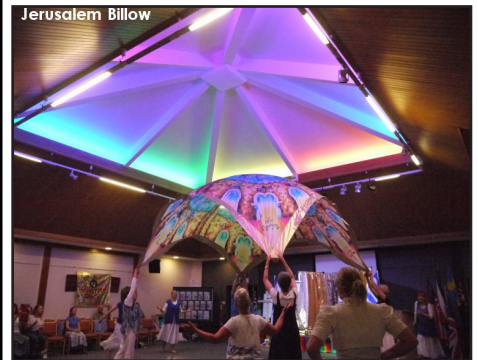
Rods, staves or staffs, ribbons, streamers, twirling banners and other props.

The first time Andrew and I saw Christian dance was in 1992 at a very large conference in the UK called Spring Harvest. Andy Au was dancing on stage using a short rod or staff. He was dancing powerfully in Spiritual Warfare about 'Breaking the chains' and it made a dramatic difference in our lives as recorded elsewhere. Since then we have learnt to use staves in our dances and in the group dances. They are popular because they seem to tell a story all of their own!

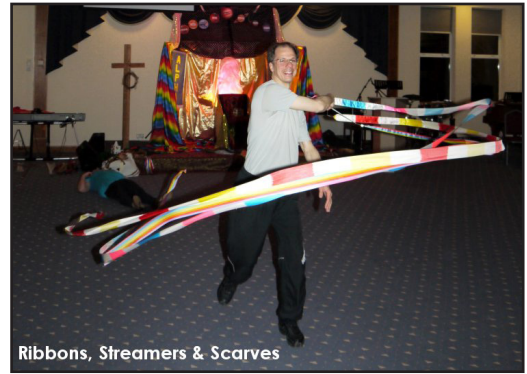
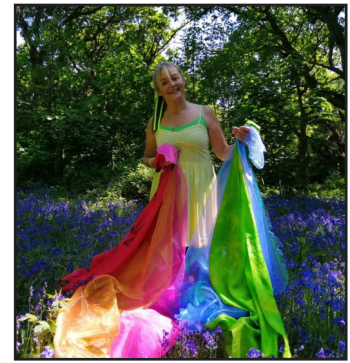
Ribbons and streamers are very vibrant and also they take some energy to keep them flying so there is often a lot of explosive power used in praise songs.

The Lord made us as creative beings and I love the way creative dancers find different ways to display and choreograph what the Lord has put in their mind. For instance Debby Ward's group dancing with lighted hoops at Christmas to display the Trinity! And Sue Doyle using a procession of dancers carrying a length of black material to depict Christ's body after the crucifixion.

My own imagination is heightened when I hear worship music and the Lord gives me pictures of how to dance the story of the song. I know this happens to other dancers as well and it is more than just dance moves or waving a flag, it is a way of bringing a whole dramatic picture using dance and props to the Glory of God.



Marie Binsley



"Using a flag or ribbon in worship helps me to dance as it gives me confidence to move. Even a limited movement vocabulary looks and feels good. I particularly like the energy of a 6 metre ribbon; you have to keep moving or it falls to the ground."
- John Usher

The Rod / Staff

Staffs are one of the many props that can be used to extend and develop the movements which we can use in worship, prayer and presentation. Staffs can have an added significance because of the examples and imagery that surrounds them in the Bible through which they can represent authority, security, guidance and as a weapon.

I have used staffs for many years and in a variety of contexts. I have found them particularly powerful in corporate worship, prayer and spiritual warfare as a group moves in unity.

Last week I taught a workshop on 'zoom' on Psalm 23 - we moved using staffs. The participants joined us from homes, halls and gardens, some used rolled flags or broom handles - but as we moved in unity there was a powerful sense of God's spirit. God is not limited by geographical location, and social distancing is opening exciting opportunities for corporate worship and prayer across the nations.



Steven Turner

Photo: Steven Turner

To see Steven's latest dance video go to ... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5G3S3ez75Os>

Personal Testimonies

Flagging For Jesus!

Many people ask me the question – why do you flag?

In short flagging is an extension of my heart, and my heart belongs to Jesus Christ – the King of all Kings. It is also a conversation with God, just to pour my heart out through the act of flagging. How can I NOT worship Him for what He did for us on the Cross of Calvary. He gave His everything so that we can have eternal life! IT IS DONE!

Num 2:19 - God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?

Rom 12:1 - "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (NKJV)

The Lord works in amazing ways through His Holy Spirit that dwells in me. I would hear Gospel praise and worship songs and the Holy Spirit would ignite an urge in my spirit to praise and worship Him through dancing and flagging.... and living water will flow out of you (John 7:38 "Whoever believes in me, rivers of living water will flow from within them.") ... it is exactly how I see my flagging, prophetically, His love in me manifesting and flowing out through dancing and flagging.

The song of Iron Bell Music – "Faithfulness" - has such a deep meaning because that IS WHO GOD IS = FAITHFUL. We as humans fail in so many ways and disappoint our Father so many times BUT every time, He is taking us back. God is Faithful in the little things and in much. Slow to anger rich in love.

There are so many colours with different meanings and I believe there is no right or wrong. The Lord can show you a colour and want you to flag with it and He can give you a personal prophetic meaning for the colour.

Worship is one of the highest forms of Warfare and therefore we need to wear the Armor of God –never take it off – Just move your armour in place every morning (Through prayer and warfare thanking Him for the armour)

Retha Coetzer

Worship at sunrise - <https://www.facebook.com/InternationalChristianDanceFellowship/videos/252591415810680/>

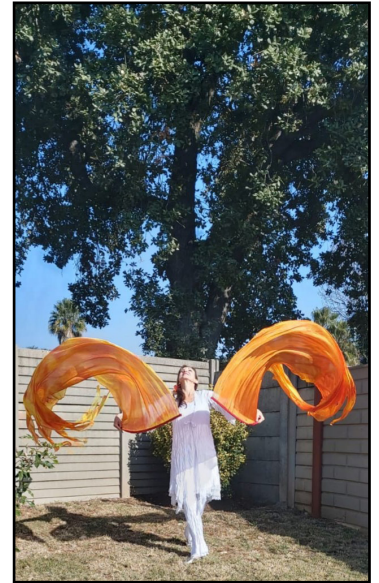


Photo: Retha Coetzer

From Rebellion to Worship

My name is Gabriel and I am 22 years old. I've been raised as a Christian but my life did not represent it very much. I got involved with juvenile violence and fights, and with so many domestic problems at home, I grew up an angry, rebellious child to my parents.

A few years ago, I met some youth members of a local Christian church in Manado (North Sulawesi), as I lived behind the church complex area. We started a friendship; they started mentoring me and teaching me dancing with flags.

The learning journey of dancing with flags started for me in February 2014, and my first involvement in ministry was the church anniversary event in May that same year. I chose this particular dance equipment/genre because of its rich meanings. Every movement, every type and color of the flag, is clearly based on the truth in God's Word.



Photo: Gabriel Pangerapan

I am still mentored even today, but I have also started mentoring other younger teens. It is in my deepest heart that they, and many others, may experience God's saving, restorative love and grace, the way my family and I did. I now submit my life in the hope that God keeps using me to guide others as a disciple of Christ through my dance ministry.

Gabriel Pangerapan

Gabriel with his flags - <https://www.facebook.com/InternationalChristianDanceFellowship/videos/256236249115730/>

Dancing With Flags

When I first was introduced to flags in the mid-nineties it was in choreographed dance with one or two flags. It was inspiring as well as challenging to learn different moves and try to coordinate them, learning about purpose, colours, and symbols, all for the glory of God. I had not been dancing for that long and flags were just one option among others. Little did I know what impact dancing with flags would have on me later on. At the ICDF conference in Sydney in 2000 I was given a small flag of Fire from David Stanfield's collection. That turned out to be a starting point for me. A small glimpse of fire started a new thing... At the conference I also bought my first flag, a silver Dove on white cloth, from Marie Bensley. With these two flags talking about the Holy Spirit – who always is pointing to Jesus – in my luggage, I started the journey back home to Sweden. As it turned out it also became the beginning of dancing with flags.

From the start I danced or waved those flags in prayer, praying “Come Holy Spirit” and dancing freely in worship. In fact that has become so precious to me, helping me focusing on the Lord although others are watching. Also the prophetic voice has become clearer and how using flags really can make a difference to the atmosphere. It is often said the flag becomes an extension of the arm. Dancing in worship, in the flow by the Holy Spirit, it becomes obvious how you “get to know” your flag, it's behaviour and flavour, and it is like if you get united. Prayer with flags can also mean intercession. A friend once gave me two silk flags painted as olive oil. So beautiful and soft. So helpful when praying for somebody in need. Very special has been those times I have danced with the silver Dove at some funerals for dear friends.

Then some of us in our fellowship started making flags, plain, in different sizes. They have been used in worship for everyone, including children, and for many church processions with dancers, intercessors, deacons, pastors and bishops. A mighty token of the people of God raising the banner of Jesus and celebrating!

Dancing with flags often reminds me of God's love for me, for us... as in Song of Songs 2:4, “He has brought me to his banquet hall, and his banner over me is love.” Dancing under his banner as his bride has fullness of joy to bring.

Therefore it may not be surprising to hear that flags and banners were among the first things I introduced to John, when we first met. Starting with preparing for our wedding we have tried to figure out how to dance together with flags as a couple. Besides guests, bridesmaids and best men who waved flags, we choreographed a wedding dance in part with and in part without flags. It was such a blessing for us to be able to dance together in the love and name of Jesus at our wedding. And also to invite all guests to join in some part.

Since dancing before the Lord has many variations and dimensions we have continued as an amateur couple to explore different combinations often mixing choreographed and free dance, with flags and without, different sizes, in the same dance. Another part is inviting others to join. Sometimes it seems like flags are helpful when one is not used to dance. Some people seem to like larger flags better and when there is someone to follow. In Sweden we have this game for children called “Follow John”. Maybe it is international... everyone is supposed to follow the leader and do like he does.... that has been helpful when John has been leading others in using larger flags in worship.

As you can see, dancing with flags has taken me on an exciting journey for twenty years, starting with a small flame....which has grown bigger.... still I very much appreciate that first flag of Fire and the gentle Dove..... they are so much needed for the start of a new thing! As Jesus said when he talked about the mustard seed and the kingdom of heaven, Matt. 13:31-32.

What a Lord we serve who invites us into his life, his love and his everlasting blessing!!

Kristina Lage



Photo: Kristina Lage

How to make Ring Flags

HOW TO MAKE

RING FLAGS

- Ring flags are lovely + versatile, suitable for adults + children + all genders.

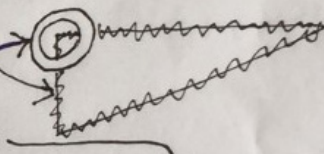
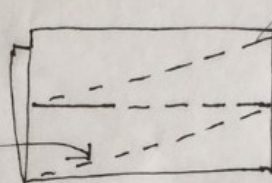
What You Need:

- Rings (2-3" dia.)
 - Fabric (36")
 - Needle + thread or sewing machine
- Options:**
- Wood rings from craftstore
 - Plastic curtain rings
 - Metal rings
 - Light weight sheer will float in air like princess flags.
 - Heavy weight material will snap like swords.



Directions:

- If using new fabric (36" long), fold lengthwise (16" long for small children).
- Cut as per dashed line. (makes 8 pieces).
- If you have sewing machine, overcast edges to prevent fraying (or do by hand).
- Place ring on fabric corner.
- Fold fabric over ring + stitch by machine or hand.



Options:

- Try putting 2 different color pieces on 1 ring.
- Add colored ribbons on the ring.
- Place 1 ring in each hand for worship, using motions of up + down, side to side, circles, etc.

Darlene West
WESTWORKS FLAGS



Darlene West

Called to Shofar

Psalm 150:3 - Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, Praise the LORD.



Photo: Jacques Coetzer

What is a shofar?

God's voice, a warfare instrument and a worship instrument. In the biblical times the shofar was used to call the people together to assemble with four different sounds. It was also used by the watchman on the wall of the city to warn the people of the enemy coming.

When and why do I blow the shofar?

To worship God, to call for repentance, warfare, celebration, victory, healing, a warning to other, to thank Abba Father for the sacrifice of his Son Jesus Christ.

Who may blow the shofar?

- God-Ex 19:16-19
- Angels-Matt 24:31
- Priests-Num 10:8-Who are priests now? We are (1 Pet 2:9)
- Jesus-1 Thes 4:16

What effect does the blowing of the shofar have on the enemy? (Confusion and enemy walls are broken down)

Judges 7:20-22 ... The three companies blew the trumpets and smashed the jars. Grasping the torches in their left hands and holding in their right hands the trumpets they were to blow, they shouted, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!" While each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled. When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the LORD caused the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords. The army fled to Beth Shittah toward Zererah as far as the border of Abel Meholah near Tabbath.

How do I blow the shofar?

There were and still are four type of calls still blown today during Jewish feasts. After the final sacrifice Jesus Christ and the new covenant God made with his children, I blow the shofar totally depending under the leading of the Holy Spirit.

In short, the four calls:

1. Te'Kiah - Call to worship (A long blast with one or two notes (Ps 150:3)
2. Sh'Varim - Call to repentance, brokenness (3 medium blasts-two tones each) (Is 58:1; Hos 8:1; Joel 2:1)
3. Te'Ruah - Call to warfare, celebration and victory (9 short staccato blasts) (Judges 7:15-22)
4. Te'KiÁh Ge'Do'Lah - Call for healing, the rapture, a thanks for God's mercy, goodness and redemption (an extra-long single blast getting louder until no breath left) (Ex 19:19; Rev 1:10; Rev 4:1 - Rapture)

My testimony

I was saved by the grace of Abba Father through the blood of Jesus and by the steadfast prayers of my wife in 2001, after 8 years into our marriage. We grew together into the body of Christ as a unity in a Pentecostal Church and the Holy Spirit equipped us in different gifts. My passion was counselling, deliverance and both were empowered by Spiritual Warfare.

I bought a Shofar a couple of years ago, however never had an urge to blow the shofar until one day during my sleep early in the morning I clearly heard a voice "Gatekeeper" (Watchman on the wall). I woke up with a passion and studied the shofar and the Holy Spirit taught me how to blow in the spirit and not in the flesh. I started blowing the shofar as part of a dance ministry where my wife did worship dancing in a group. One day during one of these worship dance events I was anointed the same way Aaron was anointed with oil and since then the Holy Spirit gave me a burning passion to pick up a flag and do movements with it. After that the rest was history. Not only do I do warfare and worship with flags, I started doing small dance steps with my wife. I can only praise Abba, because I know that walls of pride came down and I started to grow further in the "Worship body" of Christ. I became unashamed for the Glory of God and the Holy Spirit gave me boldness. The unity as husband and wife when we dance, praise and worship him is indescribable.

I have one question.....Are you ready when the last trumpet will be blown by God? (1 Thes 4:16-17)

Jacques Coetzer

Poi ... history and present

Poi is the name of a dance instrument of the indigenous Māori people of New Zealand. In the Māori language, the word poi refers to a ball on a cord. Each poi dancer holds the cord and swings the poi in complex patterns and with the unique sounds made by poi striking hands or other body parts, all the while singing an accompanying song (waiata). All poi dances are group dances. The poi is often white in colour, creating spectacular sights and sounds (most notably when special effects such as ultraviolet light are used). Waiata (songs) are often the means of communicating important truths, history and lessons (such as the dangers of taking drugs). Poi can have a short cord (short poi) or a long cord (long poi).

Today, poi are used solely by women in dance. However, poi were originally used solely by men to improve the flexibility, strength and coordination of hands, wrists and arms, as a means of training for the wielding of warfare weapons such as taiaha, patu and mere. All Māori kapahaka (a set of group song and dance items) is performed with huge attention to complete unity and coordination with each other, often with breath-taking complexity, unison and striking group patterns. In poi as in the other forms of Māori dance, huge skill and extensive practice is needed to achieve all movements and exact coordination with others in the kapahaka team. Thus, the history and use of poi have become special and part of a unique identity for Māori and also for many non-Māori New Zealanders.



Numerous parallels can be drawn from the above in a Christian context: unity, dedication, commitment, learning, unified group expression and celebration, offering of skills and passion, creativity, beauty, inspiring awe and worship in the viewers. Poi are increasingly used in New Zealand Christian contexts as instruments of worship and praise. Anyone can use poi in this context. However, the greatest power and authority are generally evident when a Christian Maori woman is using the poi. Here, the poi becomes a weapon of spiritual warfare as well as an instrument of worship.

Debbie Bright

Dancing with Fire-Poi

Hi. My name is Ann, but most of my friends call me Sparky, a prophetic nickname I was given when I was an energetic teenager. I grew up as a Christian in a conservative home in Adelaide and went straight into teaching. I was always creative and enjoyed dancing, but I wasn't aware of the option of using dance or art to connect to God.

During a long process of healing from an injury with severe daily pain, I started twirling with a firestaff which allowed physical expression despite very limited movement.

I left Adelaide and teaching to join YWAM in NSW, then moved to Melbourne and ran a Personal Training business, focussed on rehabilitation. I met other fire twirlers and continued to develop my skills and was invited to perform.

When I first saw worship dance, I felt deeply drawn in my spirit to pursue this. As I have explored what this looks like in my life as a fire dancer, God has sometimes shown up powerfully and I have felt more like an observer when I experience God flow through me.

While interstate I connected to Christians who, through their freedom, encouraged me to develop my unique connection to God through the flow arts. The path has been very difficult at times, but I have been rewarded by moments when I have felt in the middle of what I was created to do. It has been a gift that I have been given to spend time with God, not just to express, but also to process and navigate through life.

Through dance God has helped me “be still” and pray from and listen through my heart, for healing and “peace that passes understanding”; beyond the freedom-destroying legalism that had formed much of my original framework.

It is hard to summarise my journey and there are too many experiences to explain how God has encouraged me through fire dancing. The opportunities I have had, despite initially being a self-conscious untrained dancer, have convinced me of God’s approval despite this artform sometimes being judged or misunderstood. The beauty of this creative expression has allowed me to share my faith with non-believers and, at times, He has used the fire as a cleansing element to clear atmospheres and allow me to invite Him in. Other creatives have commented on an indescribable difference in my fire dancing that they have been drawn to, and I know this is God.

I like poi as they allow a greater freedom of movement, are really portable and they don’t require a lot of space, but my favourite apparatus at the movement are hoops. I do use LED glow apparatus as well as fire, but the fire is usually more impactful for me. The sound of the rushing flames and the heat reminds me of God’s Power and Love and the danger aspect reminds me to be humble and prayerful. Fire also represents the Holy Spirit and passion and I have used fire dance theatre as a medium to tell stories of God’s redemption- beauty from ashes through His healing.

I would be happy to answer any questions and develop connections. My best contact is probably through Facebook messenger at the moment. Thank you for the opportunity to share. (On page 14 we take you behind the scenes to find out how Sparky approaches some of her choreographies.)

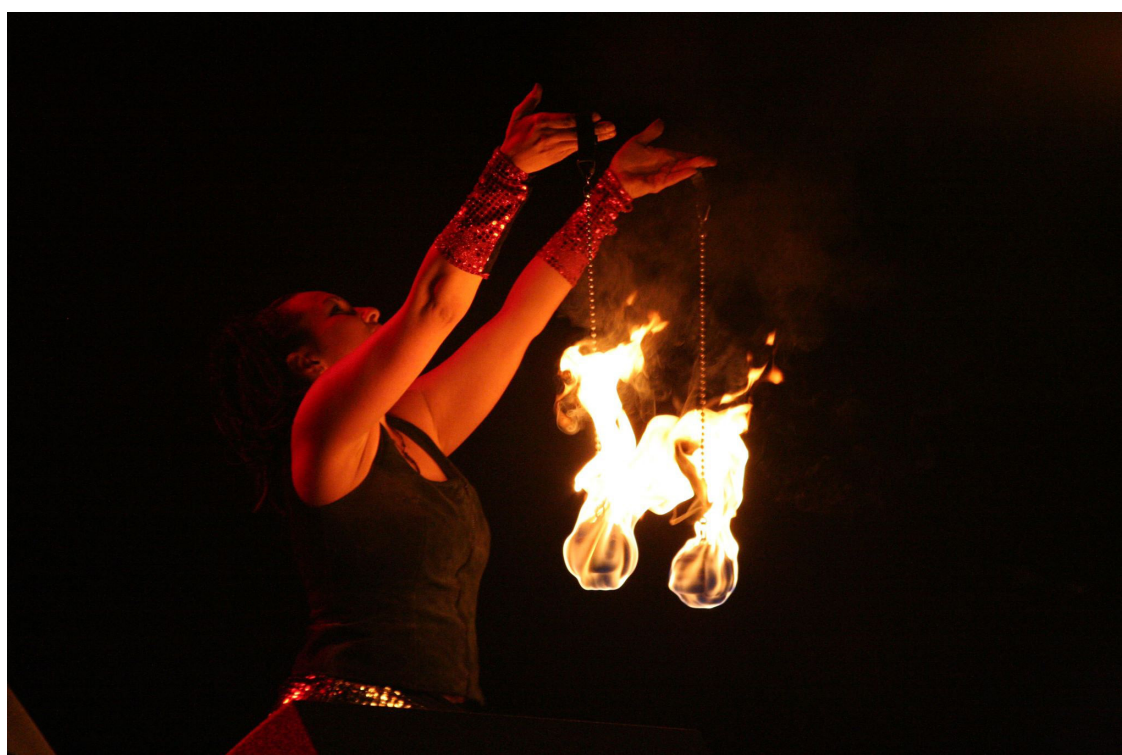


Photo: Sparky

From meditation to choreography

Meditation - Freedom

Why do we let fear rob us? It blocks us receiving from God. The double-mindedness comes out of reasonings. When we let go of the “shoulds” (law), we become free to choose. Then, choosing the right thing is natural for us, as the spirit of God lives inside of us, guiding and prompting us as we follow peace. Legalism blinds us to the spirit from which our deepest desires flow.

As we walk along our paths, we come across places that no-one has traveled. It becomes hard going- dead trees and branches obscuring our way and slowing our pace to an awkward weaving. This is the artist's role- to clear the way and lead others into freedom.



Photo: Sparky

Meditation - Hope

Hope often seems to come out of loss (beautiful carpet of moss on a dead fallen tree). This hope that defies logic and our circumstances fills us with a sense of peace ... GOD'S PEACE. To find it we must dig deep. We must release the surface layers by acknowledging our feelings, processing and accepting- being strong enough to be vulnerably open to truth, despite the embarrassment, humiliation, hurt and grief. This hope in Jesus often comes when we are no longer strong enough, when we are at the end of our own hope- the hopelessness we feel can prompt us to surrender. Only then can we be truly full of hope.

Often God works through community as we grow into Jesus with skin on, changing more and more to be the unique individuals we are created to be.

Like water drops on a waxy leaf seeming like a perfect spherical jewel. Yet they do not provide nourishment while in isolation. When several droplets join until the weight of the combined drops roll off the leaf where it can be absorbed. God designed these droplets to realise our potential in community.

Though I have felt fear at expressing myself in words, my community has strengthened me to release the things that God puts in my heart. Freedom comes from choosing to be obedient to the spirit stirring in my heart.

Choreography

(low light- dimming??), I am unlit as 4 torches come through audience. I am on the floor (representing at end of own strength and crying out to God)

(blackout)- representing needing to fully surrender to God and acknowledge we are nothing by self

(2 torches each side join to become one each side of me and light my apparatus, which I then join together.)

The flames coming from the other torches, join together in unity and symbolize the passing on of HOPE- as we encourage each other we grow and the hope within us grows.

I start to rise, first amazed and thankful for God's grace, then dancing joyfully in the freedom of God releasing His gift. I plan to incorporate movements that symbolize growing into who we are created to be.

I pray that I may be an instrument that God uses to release creative people to worship God in the unique way God has planned.

Sparky

Poi creation story - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AJa0PUx8Y8RLIkev80tYvQdwd0rYUp8H/view>

Riverstone (freestyle) - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1J7A9XrjsIoMjAdad9fy3qIDPWeNxWiJ6/view>