



# ICDF

International Christian Dance Fellowship

*A series of articles from CDF leaders and teachers on different aspects of Faith, Arts and Ministry re-printed from the ICDF Journal "Inspire".*

*Not all views expressed are necessarily the views of ICDF.  
Papers can be accessed through the website [www.icdf.com](http://www.icdf.com)*

## *O UT OF THE DEPTHS* by Paula Douthett

*T*his paper is about accessing emotions and learning to express them in movement for effective ministry to others. Starting with the example of Psalm 130, I write about the importance of being able to express ourselves from the depths of our hearts. I show how God has created human beings - body, soul and spirit - to be able to do so. Through personal testimony of my own journey and the call of



God on my life to be His dancer, I describe my contact and the influence of four great Modern Dance pioneers: Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, Mary Wigman and Doris Humphrey. These four, and others reformed the art of dance from a state of virtuosity and meaningless content to a new art expressing human life.

PAULADOUTHETT

|

O Lord, from the depths of despair I cry for your help. Hear me! Answer! Help me! Lord, if you keep in mind 1 our sins then who can ever get an answer to his prayers? But you forgive! What an awesome thing this is! That is why I wait expectantly, trusting God to help, for He has promised. I long for Him more than sentinels long for the dawn. O Israel, hope in the Lord; for He is loving and kind, and comes to us with armloads of salvation. He himself shall ransom Israel from her slavery to Sin. (Ps 130, Living Biblg)

The Psalmist is emotionally expressing his pain and reaching out for God's mercy from the depths of his being, through a prayer that he is confident is being heard by God. And we who read his words can identify with his pain and anguish, because we have known these depths of despair in our lives. The faith of the Psalmist in a God who is there and hears, builds our faith and points us to Him. God has created human beings as a trinity of body, soul and spirit. What effects one part effects the whole. Jesus died to make us whole."... it was our grief He bore, our sorrows that weighed Him down... but He was wounded and bruised for our sins. He was chastised that we might have peace; He was lashed - and we were healed!" (Isaiah 53: v 4 & 5 Living Bible).

The knowledge of Jesus' walk of suffering and death, releases us to acknowledge these real feelings and express them to Him. Yet how often are we afraid to do so? . 'j ●-

We live in denial, and in emotional suppression, especially with the emotions of anger, fear, despair, bitterness, malice,

resentment, grief and sorrow. Denying these powerful emotions, by either blocking or repression, can contribute to states such as depression, or even physical illnesses.

## Four Great Pioneer Dancers

I loved Modern Dance because of its expressive nature. Martha Graham's technique with its basis in contraction and release had the potential for a gamut of deep emotions. Martha Graham always said that movement never lies. You are who you are when you move. She wrote in her auto biography which was published after her death in 1991:

"I am a dancer. I believe that we learn by practice. Whether it means to learn to

\* dance by practising dancing or to learn to live by practising living, the principles are the same. In each it is the performance of a dedicated precise set of acts, physical or intellectual, from which comes shape of achievement, a sense of one's being, a satisfaction of spirit.

One becomes in some area an athlete of God. To practice means to perform, in the face of all obstacles, some act of vision, of faith, of desire. I think the reason dance has held such an ageless magic for the world is that it has been the symbol of U... the performance of living. ...art is eternal, for it reveals the inner landscape, ●●● which is the soul of man."

Martha Graham's art reflected outwardly, the inner reality, "...to pierce through all the strata of the trivial to the roots of human experience."<sup>2</sup> "Instead of trying to escape the world around her and clothe herself in a remote vision of beauty, she scrutinised that



