

LITURGICAL DANCE

Carol Hayes-Gegner

Liturgical dance was begun at St. John's in 1971 by Aldema Ridge. The Dance Group consisted of 4 adults and 4 to 6 Middle School students. When Ms. Ridge married and moved away, leadership was continued by Carol Hayes and Bill Kadonsky.

The dancers considered Liturgical Dance to be a ministry to: 1. Help the worshipping community break open the readings(s) and 2. Feel comfortable using their bodies, as well as their voices, in responding to the readings and prayers. Prior to Vatican 2 the community was much more passive; the dancers encouraged them to be active participants in the Liturgy. The Liturgical Dancers were supported by God's Love Charismatic Community, St. John's Liturgy Committee, and Fr. Schaefer.

Initially, the dancers were permitted to assist at one Mass per weekend on each of the Sundays in Advent and Lent. They would dance to live or taped music, or to the spoken word. Before each of these Masses the dancers would explain the theory behind Liturgical Dance and the importance of using the body in prayer, and would teach the community gestures to use as responses. They would then lead the Community in the gestured responses during the Liturgy.

As the Liturgical Dancers were accepted in the parish their use was expanded to include Communal Reconciliation Services, the All Saints Day Service (which included volunteers emerging from the community reciting and moving to a Litany of the Saints), Good Friday and Holy Saturday services, and special Sunday evening liturgies planned by one of our visiting Jesuits who was a musician. They also assisted at God's Love Good Friday Retreats, at several weddings, and at Deacon Don Parsons' first Mass after Ordination. When the Knights of Columbus began doing the Living Stations on Good Friday, it was initially women from the Liturgical Dance Group who joined them to portray the women in the Stations.

The Liturgical Dance Group also represented St. John's community in Interfaith services such as the Thanksgiving Eve service, Good Friday's Seven Last Words, and the Easter Sunrise service at Lake Kittamaquidi. Liturgical Dance continued on a regular basis at St. John's until the late 1970's and on an occasional basis into the late 1980's. The size and composition of the Liturgical Dance group varied over the years, but the basic principles of ministry established at the beginning remained constant.