

By: Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow

Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow is Pastor at First Baptist Church of Bainbridge, NY and serves on the Executive Boards for NYS Ministers Council and the American Baptist Churches NYS Region.

### Life Is Like A Dance

A friend of ours loves to do the two-step. It is a close dance that requires a strong lead and a willing and attentive partner. In doing the two-step someone has to lead and someone has to follow. An important step in any dance that requires a partner is that the follower let the leader lead. But it also important to choose a good leader. And, if the partner who is supposed to follow begins to try to take the lead there is a struggle: toes get stepped on, arms get twisted, feelings get hurt, and the dance won't work.



I close my eyes to block out the distractions - much like we do when we pray. Closing my eyes helps me to focus more clearly: it is only me and the leader. When I close my eyes I can pay better attention to the subtle push and pull of the hand, the cues given by the palm in the small of my back - sort of like a toggle signaling left, right, forward, back. A light touch means a small move, a strong one means a more sweeping motion is coming. Being sensitive to the way the leader leads is so important.

You have to know your leader and how he/she leads. It takes practice, we don't do it perfectly the first time, or even the hundredth. And if we don't practice daily then we get rusty, we forget how the dance goes.

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You have to know your leader and how he/she leads. It takes practice, we don't do it perfectly the first time, or even the hundredth. And if we don't practice daily then we get rusty, we forget how the dance goes.

The dance is a metaphor for following God - and Jesus is the gold standard - he's like Fred Astaire. He is the leader that instructs us and helps us along the way. And the Holy Spirit is the intuitive sense that allows us to discern - based on the subtle pressure in the small of our back - whether we go left or right, forward or back.

In life, there are times when we are called to be a leader, and times when we are called to follow one. We always have a choice to follow or to lead. And when we follow we have the choice of who we choose to lead us, and we want to choose a good leader.

We want to choose a leader who knows the steps to the dance, and we want a strong and consistent leader - someone we can rely on to lead us smoothly according to the music that comes our way. A good leader has the ability to navigate his/her way through any difficult tune that is played.

It's important to be a really good follower, and to practice that. But it is extremely important whom you choose to follow. You want to follow someone who has the ability to not only lead you beautifully through the dances you know, but you want someone who can also lead you smoothly and even grace-fully through difficult unfamiliar pieces. And it's also important to know whether your partner is doing the Two Step, or the Hustle.

In choosing a good partner we want to follow the gold standard. Jesus is our model in the dance called life. The moves Jesus makes are those sanctioned by God, and his moves are stated most clearly in his service to God. And his leadership instructs us in the way of the dance of the kingdom: *Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me...just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.* (Matthew 25:31-45)

Now go, follow in the dance that Jesus leads - the dance that leads to eternal life. Amen.

Image: Swing Dancing on Granville Street; By: GoToVan

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