

**Sermon Preached  
by Doug King  
June 6, 2004  
2nd Samuel 6:1-5, 12-19**

There is no doubt about it. It is too big a day. We have confirmands to confirm, new members to welcome into membership, a picnic to be hosted, and an ordination to be celebrated. My neurotic inner voice is taking wagers on which one of these balls we are juggling can not be kept sufficiently airborne. But one thing has struck me about this gloriously hectic everything but the holy kitchen sink sort of day. Twice today we will engage in the age-old ritual of the laying on of the hands. This morning with our confirmands and this afternoon with Judith all who are ordained will come forward and hands will be placed upon the shoulders of those whose hands are on the shoulders of those in front of them as we touch those who are kneeling. Twice we will engage in this physical symbolism of blessing, of the passing down of our tradition from one generation to the next. It is a beautiful and powerful moment in the stillness as we pray, but I just could not help but think about how I might choose to tinker with it if I could.

It dawned on me that perhaps even with all of its wonderful power, the laying on of hand is just a tad too static. As people of the reformed faith we believe that the tradition, the faith, is passed down to each new generation that they may grapple with it so that it eloquently speaks God's Word in their time and place, in every time and place. God does not stand still and certainly we should not stand still in our efforts to be faithful to God. So I thought perhaps, now stay with me here, instead of standing still for the laying on of hands, we could have a conga line. You know, Ba ba ba ba ba bah. Richard, can you give me a little conga? We would still be engaged in the long line of the laying on of hands, we would just be giving it some forward motion with a little hip action. Led by our confirmands this morning and Judith this afternoon we could conga around the sanctuary and maybe even out onto the south lawn.

If it was good enough for David with the ark of the covenant, why wouldn't it work for us? David was swept up uncontrollably by his proximity to God's holiness that much to the shame and chagrin of his wife, Michal, he just could not help but dance, even if it meant violating the social mores of what it meant to be King in that tradition. Now you rarely hear the words uncontrollable and Presbyterian in the same sentence so I know I am working uphill here. But the sharing of our faith and tradition should not be a ponderous act of passing down an ironclad structure. What we are seeking to engage in is a much more delicate process. Like fine ballroom dancing, the leading is done ever so gently as couples whirl slowly around the room. There is a structure to the steps but there is freedom as well to be found in how the steps are enacted. There is an opportunity for improvisation. There is an opportunity for God's Spirit to lead us through these steps in exciting and new ways we have yet to imagine.

There is a theological concept called perichoresis, which seeks to explain the way in which the three members of the Trinity, Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit, relate to each other. The linguists in the crowd are I am sure well ahead of me. Perichoresis means to dance around. It suggests that the three members of the Trinity are not bound together in some formal unmoving pattern but that they are constantly moving around each other and relating to each other in new and dynamic ways. Our God is not a fixed concept to be labeled and placed in a box. And neither is our relationship to God designed to be fixed by a tradition that is not open to nuance and change. But being open to viewing our God in new ways is not always an easy task. It is hard to change our vision but the implications are significant.

I am reminded of a scene in the movie, "The Fisher King," in which Robin Williams plays an emotionally disturbed homeless man. He is walking through Grand Central Station, pre renovation, and observing the chaotic hustle and bustle of jostling bodies as everyone is scrambling for their destination heads bowed low. As he is watching the crowds he spots a woman who he loves from afar and suddenly his vision is transformed and the world is transformed. The great room, once dingy and gray, has become bathed in beautiful streaming light and transformed into a lovely dance floor.

The chaotic commuters have become graceful dancers gliding together through the space with elegance. Through his loving eyes there is a beautiful pattern at play, a delicate interaction of so many people following the music. It is a breathtaking transformation.

So have I convinced you yet that we should conga? I am sensing that I have at least a good portion of the choir ready to go but perhaps we have not reached consensus with the entire room just yet. That's okay. But if we do not conga with our hips and feet today, let us conga with our hearts.

Let us recognize that our Trinitarian God is not located in some distant stagnant place but as we speak the Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit are do-si-doing wherever God's people are gathered. We need to keep our eyes open to the new ways this God in motion may be speaking to us through our newest members and our newest leaders.

Let us remember and celebrate our glorious spiritual heritage. Picture, David, the King of the Jews, dancing with wild and sweaty abandon, with no thought to how he would be perceived or what the consequences might be, because he was overcome by his proximity to the Holiness of God. When we are gathered together we share the exact same proximity to God. How do you suppose we should respond to being in the midst of the Holy?

As we lay our hands upon our confirmands this morning and the soon to be ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament, Judith Bryan this afternoon, let us celebrate each new generation of the faithful. And let us create space for them to lead the church in new ways as the Spirit of the Dance guides them.

On this hustling and bustling day, let us view this church and the world through loving eyes, through faithful eyes. Let us recognize the dance in the midst of us as we bump and jostle each other racing from committee meetings to Bible studies to mission opportunities. Let us be a bit more gentle with each other as we whirl around the ballroom of this world. Let us listen for the divine melody calling us forward to a

pattern, a design, a dance step, that is new in each generation. Let us dance with our God. Amen.