

Redlands Daily Facts

October 6, 2004

Dancers with a Christian message

Dance groups from throughout Southern California will present a Christian dance concert Saturday at Trinity Evangelical Free Church REDLANDS More than 14 Christian dance groups from throughout Southern California will come to Redlands when SonLight Prayer-in-Motion hosts a Christian dance concert Saturday, Oct. 9, at Trinity Evangelical Free Church in Redlands.

Christian performance dance groups attending will include the Riverside Faith Temple Praise Dancers, directed by Katherine Williams, dancing to "My Life is in Your Hand" by God's Properties and "We Give Thanks" by the Clark Sisters.

SonLight Prayer-in-Motion began in 1994 under the direction of Mary Margaret Bawden. Her background includes a California secondary and junior college teaching credential as well as more than 20 years as an inductive Bible study leader. Bawden has a bachelor's degree in modern dance from the University of California, Riverside, as well as foundational training in the Cecchetti method of ballet. She will soon receive her master's degree in worship, with an emphasis in dance, from Hope International University in Fullerton.

Two SonLight groups create dance at Trinity Evangelical Free Church as a ministry of worship, healing, teaching and celebration. Both groups will participate in the dance concert Saturday. SonLight I is a group of parishioners who have no formal technical training in dance. Members of SonLight II have formal technical training beyond a beginning level. Both groups use dance as an expression of faith, making biblical messages visual through the language of dance.

The ministry of SonLight has grown and served in many areas from church services to rest homes and retreats. SonLight has also ministered at the National Christian Dance Conference, the National Sacred Dance Festival and the National Evangelical Free Church Conference, as well as at secular conferences such as California Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (CAHPERD) and the highly acclaimed Festival of the Stars choreography festival held in Palm Desert at the McCallum Theatre.

SonLight's recently placed as a finalist in the Festival of the Stars, for the third consecutive year. The festival will be held in Palm Springs Nov. 7. Choreography finalists included entries from Argentina, Florida, Texas, New York, Arizona, Nevada, San Francisco, San Diego and Los Angeles.

Bawden said she felt called to the concept of "prayer in motion" at 15. Although highly trained in ballet, she found herself attracted to the varied choreographic approaches found in modern dance. As a result, she got her degree in modern dance in 1975. As an undergraduate student in modern dance, she was asked to teach the lower level ballet classes. Upon graduation, she was offered the position of ballet and modern dance instructor for both Crafton Hills College and Mount San Jacinto College.

After children and family became a central focus of Bawden's life, her movement development came in sporadic periods. One of the activities she used to integrate her children and her love of dance was to develop a movement curriculum for children in a summer arts program called Creative University, which she taught for seven summers. In 1995, she taught the curriculum at the National Christian Dance Conference in Florida. In the summer of 2003, she was asked to teach "Soul-to-Sole" choreography at the National Sacred Dance Conference in Pomona.

Locally, Bawden has choreographed several musicals for LifeHouse Theater, as well as children's Christmas musicals involving from 90-125 children. She has also worked with JoDierdorff, Kelli King and Maura Townsend.

SonLight's participation in the Saturday concert will include "Song of Hope" as a congregational motion prayer scored with original music by Jeff Moore. Another SonLight selection will be their finalist entry for the McCallum festival, "Who Am I? Grace Flows Down." A third piece, "In Christ Alone," features nine men combining movement and live singing.

Trinity Evangelical Free Church is at 1551 Reservoir Road in Redlands. The concert will begin at 4 p.m. Admission is free. Information: 335-7333 or visit www.sonlightdance.orgDancers with a Christian message

(c) 2004 Redlands Daily Facts. All rights reserved. Reproduced with the permission of Media NewsGroup, Inc. by NewsBank, Inc.