

Dancing with an angel

When I was in my late twenties, my husband and I lived in Oregon for six years. Each summer and fall small towns around the state held festivals. Once we went to Mt. Angel, named for its Abby. We entered the long-crowded metal building to find a beer hall with brats on one side and a live polka band on the other. Hundreds of people formed a rough circle in front of the band and when the music started the dancers swirled in pairs and the entire circle spun around the room.



I stood mesmerized beside my husband and our friends watching the dance. When it stopped a gentleman I'd never seen before came up to me. He bowed politely and asked me to dance. I stammered, eyes darting to my husband and friends and back to the man. I had taken ballroom dance in college but danced very little since then and didn't know how to polka. While I stood there trying to say I didn't know how to dance; the man placed his left hand gently on my lower back and lifted my left hand with his right. Before I could object, he whisked me away and I was swept up in the massive circle of dancers.

We romped and spun around the room. Sometimes I kept up, but mostly I stumbled over my own feet and his. None of my moves perturbed the man. His steady pressure on my back and guidance with his hand kept me going and kept me in sync with the dance. It wasn't until that moment that I understood what it means for one dancer to lead. Soon I found the rhythm and was able to simply enjoy the movement of the dance itself and the awareness that I was part of a massive circle of hundreds of other dancers caught up in the music and the simple joy of dancing.

Too soon the music ended. The man bowed as he thanked me for the dance and then disappeared into the crowd. I wandered the hall until I found my husband and friends. Apparently, they had not seen the man. They only knew that I had disappeared into the crowd and had been searching for me until they gave up and got food hoping I would find them. I tried to explain, but my words fell short.

Now over 20 years later I still remember being swept up in the dance by an angel. I learned that it didn't matter whether or not I was a good dancer. It only mattered that I was willing to be led and join in the larger dance all around me.

Life with God is like that. We don't need to know how to pray or act or dance *for* God. We only need to be willing to be led. Before we know it, we are caught up in God's dance. Sometimes gliding and sometimes stumbling through our lives, but always held in God's firm but gentle hand, we move to the music along with the rest of creation. All of us are invited into this dance of joy and love.

Have you felt God's hand extend to you? How have you taken God's hand?