



*“The Shaker Medley,” (also called Shaker Suite) Holy Spirit/Newman Hall Parish, Berkeley, CA, 1991. Carla De Sola, David McCauley, Janet, Kevin?, Nona. Others are led into the dance. The hymn “The Lord of the Dance” comes from a Shaker melody. (GTU Archives)*

### **18. University of California, Berkeley; Newman Hall–Holy Spirit Parish, Omega, Easter Vigil**

CDS: I have been associated, more than any other place here in Berkeley, [with] the Newman Center, called [the Newman Hall–Holy Spirit Parish] Chapel. And it is a dark and beautiful church, sparingly adorned with the cross, the altar, the tabernacle, the ambo, all created by Stephen De Staebler who was a [San Francisco] Bay Area sculptor, a very religious man, and a friend of the GTU.

When you enter the GTU library, you see his *Winged Figure* soaring in the center, spanning two floors in height. (Omega created a dance based on that sculpture.) But back to Newman: people either hate or love the sanctuary. It is hard on dance because some of the flooring is sloped. You can go sliding down if you are not careful. I have been at Newman for a long time—since the mid-90s. We have been dancing during Holy Week more than at any other time, beginning with an offertory dance for Holy Thursday.

The dance includes a danced procession of “disciples” (mostly Newman parishioners) coming down the aisle with a simple cloth and bread and wine to set the table. Then we joyously circle the altar and enact a stylized version of the foot washing that we have just been a part of in the

first part of the liturgy. There are significant other motifs, and the dance concludes with setting the altar with all the artifacts for the Mass, and the “disciples” going off, as if to the garden. (This is an idea taken from the *Acts of John*, where it is recounted that Jesus led his disciples to the garden and danced.) At the end of the service for Holy Thursday, we also help strip the altar and lead everybody out into a grove of redwoods outside the church, with chanting, candles, and incense. From there, we process with all to the “altar of repose.”

For the Easter Vigil, we have traditionally danced both the gospel reading for the year (A, B, or C) as well as a spectacular table-setting dance. At the end of the liturgy, the congregation is invited to joyfully circle the altar, as “Lord of the Dance” is sung. The gospel reading is always an account of the women coming to find the empty tomb, the reading proclaimed by the celebrant. This is timed to correspond with the dancers’ movement and sounds of drum and ringing of bells. It is very dramatic, beginning with the angel running down the aisle to the drumming. He stops in front of the altar and gestures mightily so you can imagine the stone being moved. He jumps onto a stool behind the altar, so he is very visible, lifts up his arm, and gestures toward the women crouched at the back of the aisle. They come down the aisle with mournful movements of grief, sometimes holding a jar of oil for anointing. They creep up to the altar and shudder as they see the empty tomb. At Newman, the altar has been created by Stephen De Staebler and actually has two big holes in it—it is an unusual altar. The angel whips out from one of the holes a long scarf, as we hear the reader proclaiming that Jesus is not here, he has risen. The dancers, reacting with various movements, follow the angel around the altar in consternation and fall down. Again the angel brushes the white cloth, or shroud, over them and leaves, circling the congregation, returns, and the women follow him off, excited, running to tell the others. (The Gospel of the Lord.) Alleluias are softly chanted.

The next dance for the vigil is “Come to the Feast,” a spectacular offertory dance we call simply “Table-Setting Dance.” *It is set to an excerpt of Aaron Copeland’s An Appalachian Spring, which uses the melody of “’Tis a Gift to Be Simple” a Shaker song, and later, at the end of the liturgy, as people are invited to circle around the altar, we use the same theme, known now as “Lord of the Dance.” To reiterate, “Lord of the Dance” is also based on “Gift to be Simple,” so there is a progression here of the Shaker song, “It’s a gift to be simple, It’s a gift to be free” from Aaron Copeland to “Lord of the Dance.”*

What is not known to the congregation is that I use transformed motifs of the original Shaker steps for the dancers as they are circling the altar. Why have I called this a spectacular offertory? Nothing so far, but right before two of the Newman dancers bring forward the bread and wine, a huge white table cloth stretched out along the back pews, almost the size of the width of the sanctuary, gets flown over the heads of the congregants; one dancer holds the cloth in the center, running down the center aisle, and two dancers running down the side aisles. It stays aloft, flown over the heads of almost all the congregation—they look up and gasp each year, “Ahhhhh!!!” Then the bread and wine are processed forward, and are placed onto the tablecloth. The whole dance is very graceful and colorful—the dancers wear “floating sleeves” that move beautifully, the table and all are incensed, and all the artifacts for the Mass are carefully laid out on the altar. One by one the dancers leap off and down the aisle, their sleeves streaming high behind them.



*The type of participational dance seen here is used at the end of the Easter Vigil with people joyfully singing "Lord of the Dance. "The Shaker Medley," (also called Shaker Suite) Holy Spirit/Newman Hall Parish, Berkeley, CA, 1991. (GTU Archives)*

Carla De Sola has frequently danced and choreographed for the Feast of Pentecost. In ways where words are inadequate, dance helps to express the movement and power of the Holy Spirit. The Sojourner Peace Ministry which has continued and evolved and publishes *Sojourner* magazine, sent out an invitation to a gathering in Washington, D.C. in 1985. De Sola danced in that gathering to deepen its messages.

The invitation said:

#### Peace Pentecost 1985

Something is happening in the churches in the midst of the deepening political crisis, a powerful movement of Christian conscience is arising. This emerging movement, rooted in faith, is transforming not only the life of the church but also the politics of the nation. The political indicators are bleak. The Reagan Administration has been returned to power by overwhelming majority, and the government continues its policy of war in Central America, its support for the racist South African regime, its escalation of the arms race, and its abandonment of the poor. In the face of this situation, the movement of Christian conscience is a sign of hope. In response to the immoral and dangerous actions of the government, Christians are moving from protest to nonviolent resistance. Pentecost 1985 will be an occasion to gather together all the streams of Christian conscience and resistance now growing in the church.

We invite you to come to Washington DC, this Pentecost to join us for a National Conference and a day of Christian resistance. The conference is titled "The Rise of Christian Conscience--a National Conference of Christian non-violence and Civil Disobedience". The weekend gathering for reflection, training, prayer, and worship will culminate in a day of Christian resistance to the growing militarism of our nation. The three-day conference will begin Saturday morning May 25, and will culminate on Tuesday, May 28, in a "Day of Christian Resistance," during which Christians from all over the country will offer nonviolent resistance to the policies of violence and injustice that mark this administration, both at home and abroad. . . . A large Peace Pentecost worship service will be held the evening of Pentecost Sunday, May 26.

The invitation went on to explain the many Christian justice and peace groups involved in this gathering, then it explained the connection with Pentecost:

As on the first Pentecost, Peace Pentecost 1985 will be an occasion to proclaim the good news in the streets and to make visible to the nation this growing movement in a broader and clearer way than before. Our presence and public witness will make visible what the government would prefer remained unseen behind locked doors by going nonviolently to places where violence and militarism are protected by law and by force, we will exhibit another, stronger power; trust in the spirit of God. As large numbers of Christians commit prayerful Civil Disobedience, we will give a clear direction of the nation." (GTU Archives)

De Sola danced in 1985 as a statement for the non-violent power of the Holy Spirit. She has continued to dance showing the beauty of non-violence at the Nevada Nuclear test site and in Good Friday Prayer demonstrations at Livermore Lab where parts of nuclear weapons are made. She continues to have people of all ages and all cultural groups dance with her revealing that the Spirit breaks down divisions among us.



*Randy and Chris Dixon, Carla De Sola, and Kristin Burke rehearse with the melody of Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" using fiery colored flags. The altar, ambo, and crucifix overhead were designed by the sculpture Stephen De Staebler for the Newman Center Church, Berkeley, CA. (M. A. Kirk)*

### **Pentecost Opening Procession, 2016**

Choreographer: Carla De Sola. Dancers: Kristin Burke, Chris Dixon, Randy Dixon, David Henry, and Jennifer Kimball. With Beethoven's joyful melody, dancers enter with festive flags suggesting the fire and wind of the Holy Spirit.

URL: <https://youtu.be/1IUCxuMDKEw>

### **Pentecost Presentation of the Gifts, 2016**

Choreographer: Carla De Sola. Dancers: Kristin Burke, Chris Dixon, Randy Dixon, David Henry, Jennifer Kimball, James Kimball, and Karen Stillwell. De Sola exclaims, "transformed by the power of the spirit of love, we dance, giving praise and thanksgiving." The Eucharistic table is set. Dancers express both a sense of longing for the Holy Spirit and joy. Acts of the Apostles says that the Spirit is poured out on all people, young and old.

URL: <https://youtu.be/AhSif0j0AXE>

## **A Dance Reflecting on the Last Supper, Holy Thursday**

A Dance Reflecting on the Last Supper, Holy Thursday, April 2, 2015

Choreography by Carla De Sola and danced by Kristin Burke, Chris Dixon, Randy Dixon, Christine Jegan, Jennifer Kimball, and David McCauley.

Shared at a Holy Thursday Eucharist, this dance sensitively remembers the story in the Gospel of John of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples, giving an example of service and inviting service. Members of the congregation pictured are known for helping Dorothy Day's Catholic Worker Movement serving the vulnerable.

An ancient document, the Acts of John describes Jesus and his friends performing a circle dance at the Last Supper. Dancing was an integral part of Jewish celebrations.