

, Dear People of the Northern Great Lakes Synod,

One thing that you may not know about me is that when I was 16 going on 17, before Dave was my husband, he and I would “hang out” with friends at the Bel Rae Ballroom. Often there would be more than one wedding reception going on and we would get the chance to waltz, schottische, polka, foxtrot, chicken dance, and swing. We were both still learning. Dave was learning to lead, and I was learning to follow.

So it was with an adventurous spirit that in the middle of a galloping polka, Dave and I would dance near another couple who looked like they knew what they were doing and we would yell “SWITCH!” Often, this other couple was on the far side of 60 years old or so, (or maybe they were 50, I was only 16 so everyone looked old). Dave would dance away with the woman, and I would be welcomed as the man’s new dance partner. This was such a gift, because often the older gentleman really knew how to lead with practiced ease. He knew the dance steps, he knew how to guide his partner, even a dance novice, with a slight but perceptible pressure of his palm on my back, a lean here and a pull there and we would be gliding across the floor.

My job was to pay attention, to tune my movements to the slight pressure on my back and notice the push and pull through hands and arms. Paying close attention, (and sometimes counting in my head) I could follow the movements of one who had been leading the dance for years. In this way, my own dancing improved. I learned the foxtrot and variations on the waltz and the

polka...and some dances that I’m sure I don’t remember but were glad to dance in that moment.

Fast forward some 40+ years later. In early August of this year, I attended a retreat that offered reflection and discussion on the term “Perichoresis” (perry-core-ee-sis), which means, “mutual indwelling of the three persons of the Trinity.” This relationship between and among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is often described as a dance, as a circular fluidity of the one- in- three and the three- in- one of love, harmony, and the eternal movement of Creator, Beloved Son, and Holy Spirit.

Maybe the Church has always understood itself to be invited into the dance of Trinity. If so, it is only in the last few years that I have been more acutely aware of how much this swirling motion is at work among and through us. With our current challenges, with future uncertainties, with our adjustments to circumstances that may not be new to the Church but are certainly painfully new to us, we are blessed to hold the future we would pray for loosely.

What I mean by that is, we would be blessed to depend upon our eternal and divine partners in the dance, to pay close attention to the direction in which we are led, which may not be towards some past iteration of the church which we may hold dear, but instead, the dance moves us toward the unfamiliar and new. This new dance is no less graceful and engaging than the old way we moved, but we are still learning the steps as the Spirit still counts the rhythm in our ears that strain to hear. Our dance partner of the Trinity

continues to include us, our communities of faith. It is our job to pay attention to the one/s who lead us, who apply pressure here and a tug there, who lean in one direction and gently guide our steps into new choreography. Come join the dance of Trinity...and learn what God would teach us.

In Christ,

Bishop Katherine Finegan

