

## **View from the Pew**

By Mary Adamski

*Sacred Dance Guild Journal Volume 49-1, 2006*

An East Honolulu prayer group finds spiritual resonance in rhythmic motion. Praying, while swaying with hands raised in the air is not just for Pentacostals anymore. It's standard form in a lot of churches.

With contemporary church music assuming the rhythms of the secular world, there's a whole lot of shaking, clapping, swinging and stepping going on in sanctuaries.

Even denominations uptight about keeping worship separate from entertainment will allow some "liturgical movement" when it is contemplative and respectful.

Even so, the gentle circle dancing of the Prayer Cluster at Calvary-by-the-Sea Lutheran Church Tuesday felt like throwback to the '60s, where interfaith sharing of sacred dance has its roots.

Maybe it was the sensation of dropping out that did it. Just a minute from pulling out of the bumper-to-bumper commuter intensity of Kalaniana'ole Highway, the prayer group meets in a calm and quiet zone, a shaded patch of lawn with the sounds of surf washing shore.

The group clasped hands in a circle as Fatah Borsos called them to focus on their feet "connected to the Mother Earth. Bring energy up from the earth." Next, "Open the top of our heads to the heavens and bring that energy down. Let what we do be in remembrance of the one holy being."

The words come from his Sufi studies, he said later. The Sufi tradition is a mystical branch of Islamic belief, with practices of combined meditation, chanting and dance – the extreme end of which is the mesmerizing turning, spinning of "whirling dervishes" of Turkey.

The Prayer Cluster companions follow Borsos' lead in singing a simple tune which sounded like an old Negro spiritual: "One fine morning, when my work is over, I'll fly away. I'll fly away. I'll fly away to heaven."

They each spun slowly off for a circle away from the circle, including Ruth Quirk, 86, who is admittedly unsteady on her feet. Gloria Spondike was nearby, ready to steady her.

"Thy light is in a all forms and thy love, in all beings, alleluia," they sang, arms raised upward, then hands crossed over their hearts.

Most of the participants are Christian and "my way to connect with God is Christ," said Quirk. But "we are embracive ...if it makes your heart sing to connect with God. We do talk about Christ, but we are not afraid to say Allah. Sometimes we do chants that are about goddesses. Different people show up and bring their gifts."