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The Day I Danced in Jerusalem

by Lon Fendall

Dancing in Jerusalem was a wonderful experience, even though I was reluctant to do it at the time. But first there are two things I should point out about the experience. First of all, this wasn't in the Jerusalem, not even close. This Jerusalem is in a wide spot on the road not far from Shivigali, which itself is little more than a wide spot in the road, deep in sugar cane country in western Kenya. How it got the name of Jerusalem, I have no idea. The other thing you should know about the experience is that I don't



Photo courtesy of Lon Fendall.

know about the experience is that I don't dance; never have and don't have a burning desire to learn. Don't try to sign me up for an Arthur Murray class or persuade me to join a square dancing club.

But this dancing was different. When I'm able to participate in worship in countries like Congo, Burundi, Rwanda and Kenya, there is almost always some dancing. Not ballroom dancing or other types of western dancing, of course. This is dancing like David wrote about in Psalms 149:3, "Let them praise his name with dancing." And even though dancing was a forbidden activity when I was growing up, I've learned to appreciate and even enjoy the dancing in the worship services in Africa. At its best, it's not done to show off one's athletic and rhythmic skill, but to express with the whole body the deep joy we experience in lifting our praise to God.

Now back to Jerusalem. I had joined a mission team from Friends Theological College, who had agreed to preach, teach, and lead the praise and worship services at Shivigali Friends Church. It was a conference sponsored by Shivigali Youth Quarterly Meeting. Youth in this context means people under age 45 and a conference in this setting means filling the day from

early morning to late at night, with teaching, singing, and invitations to come forward and pray for salvation, to receive the Holy Spirit, or to be healed.

The journey to Jerusalem for evangelistic “open air” meetings was a way to reach out to people with spiritual needs and to provide some good ministry experience for the team from Friends Theological College. And that’s where the dancing took place. Getting there was not so easy. For our group, it meant walking on narrow and rocky paths, while carrying two large speakers, a generator, a keyboard, amplifier, and microphones. The generator was important, since there are no power lines to Jerusalem (and none to Shivigali, for that matter).



Photo courtesy of Lon Fendall.

No one asked me to join in the praise dancing that day. I just did it. I was no good at it, for sure. But it didn’t matter. It was a way of saying I wanted to be a part of sharing the Good News with the people of Jerusalem. I decided I didn’t need to be good at dancing, but just to try. And when team members called on me to give my testimony, my words probably rang a little truer because I was willing to walk a distance to be part of the outreach, willing to look foolish while dancing, and willing to express my deep love for Jesus.

In Isaiah 40:9 we are invited to “bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid.” When I read such passages in the future, happy memories will come back to me of the outreach rally in Jerusalem, Kenya that day. Of the unrestrained joy of those who walk closely with the Lord. Of sharing an umbrella with someone as we walked back through steady rain after the rally. Of letting go of some of my inhibitions and joining in sincere praise to our Savior. It was the right thing to do that day and I’d do it again.

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