

Accompanying Children's Choirs from the Hymnal

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1. Philosophy

- a. Discussion: What is the definition of a "kid's song"? What kind of lyrics should we use? Why use the hymnal?
- b. *"There are two ways of writing or speaking to children: the one is to stoop down to them; the other, to lift them up to us. The one is to make ourselves little, to talk to them as little children about little things, as if they were to be entertained as we divert a company at a puppet-show. The other is to talk to them as reasonable creatures, and to give them strong and manly sense in plain and easy language. The following hymns are written on this plan. They contain strong and manly sense, yet are expressed in such plain and easy language as even children may understand. But when they do understand them, they will be children no longer—only in years and stature."*— John Wesley, Preface to Hymns for Children (1763)
- c. Four "tests" of a good hymn in the preface to *The Hymnal for Youth* (1951) are as follows:
 - i. Does the hymn have a distinctly Christian message?
 - ii. Is the hymn good literature?
 - iii. Is the tune good music?
 - iv. Is the music singable?

2. Practice

- a. Example of a simple arrangement for kids: *"We Lift Up Our Eyes"* (SMS website)
- b. Create an arrangement of *Nothing But the Blood*
 - i. How many verses?
 - ii. Do you want a medley?
 - iii. Consider the range of notes - middle C to a treble D is probably safest for a wide range.
 - iv. Key signatures - do you want a simple modulation? Pick another hymn the 5th below (key of F following key of C), or a half step up/down in the same hymn (switch sharps and flats)
 - v. Create intro/interlude material (write on a card or record it):
 1. Use a motif
 2. 4 measures long with clear chord or octave at the end
 3. I and V chord is all you need
 - vi. Decide structure
 1. Boys and girls solo parts
 2. Simple harmony - have the older kids do an echo part, or sing a simple chord root melody on the chorus (I, IV or V chord notes, see bassline)
 3. Teach older kids how to play a chord root melody on a simple instrument, like the Glockenspiel, or use a rhythm instrument like a tambourine or bells.
 - vii. Ending - last phrase - end on vi chord, then repeat the last phrase twice as slow.
- c. Performance ideas

- i. Pair with scripture
 - ii. Write words on a card or PPT for them to follow
- 3. Resources
 - a. Southland Music Services
 - b. Majesty Music
 - c. Old hymnbooks for kids: *The Hymnal for Youth* (1951), *Hymns for Children* (1763) by Charles Wesley (see excerpt below)

H Y M N LXXXVIII.

- 1 CHILDREN have a right to sing
Praises to their Infant-King,
Tell how CHRIST the holy Child
GOD and man hath reconcil'd.
- 2 Whom the heavens cannot contain,
Very GOD and very man,
GOD was in his infancy
Weak and ignorant like me.
- 3 Wherefore did He stoop so low ?
Jesus, help my heart to know,
Thou who didst my flesh receive,
Unto me thy Spirit give.
- 4 Thus explain the mystery ;
Then I shall be one with Thee,
Then I shall above the sky
Endless hallelujah's cry.