Hymns for Children

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WHY (to sing) HYMNS?

“We sell short our children by assuming they will not like something simply because it is old or requires effort....Keep ‘faith formation’ in mind as you determine the place of hymns in your choral program.” (Heather Potter, Introduction to Of Primary Importance vol III, Choristers Guild, 2016)

WHEN (to sing) HYMNS?

daily, weekly, monthly, on special occasions, as you clean house, at bedtime, in the morning, at breakfast, at noonday, in prayer, in sad times, in seasons of joy, when you can’t sleep, in the car, when you’re grieving, when a loved one is dying, when a new baby is born. In short, sing hymns all the time.

WHERE (to sing) HYMNS?

At home, in the car, on the school bus, on long trips, at festivals, in the hospital, at the ballpark, at the dinner table, at the breakfast table, at the beach, in the mountains, in bed, at funerals, at baptisms, at the office, on the sidewalk, and in corporate worship
HOW (to sing) HYMNS?

With choreography Antiphonally
With paper plate skates In sign language
With streamers In solfege
With crayons From a rebus
With jingle bells With photos on powerpoint
With rhythm sticks While drawing a mural
With egg shakers From the balcony
With drums From the side aisles
With the adult choir From the back of the sanctuary
With the praise band From the front of the sanctuary
With the piano Refrain only
With the organ Add a descant
With handbells Select anthems that include hymns
With Orff Instruments From the hymnal
a cappella From memory

ACTIVITIES (to do with hymns)

Write a new text to an existing tune
Add a verse to an existing text
Sponsor a hymn-writing competition
Hymn Studies
Hymnal Treasure Hunts
Learn in sign language
Allow the children to introduce a new hymn to the congregation
Sponsor a cross-generational hymn sing
Host a family hymn-sing
Allow the children to lead a hymn festival
Make a CD of hymns for new families or as baptism/dedication gifts
Adopt a hymn-of-the-year: learn everything you can about this hymn
Develop a hymn memorization program (with prizes!)
Present a hymnal to graduating singers
IDEAS (for inspired hymn-singing)

Don’t accept all text/tune pairings at face value
- Although some text/tune pairings are a “must”, others might be separated without adverse consequences.
- Congregations hear familiar texts with new ears when they sing the texts to a different tune + some tunes just “sing better” than others (eg. Jesus Calls Us o’er the Tumult, Love Divine, all Loves Excelling, Amazing Grace)
- You can teach a new hymn text quickly and easily by setting it to a familiar tune

Be conscious of tempo
- Don’t allow hymns to be the slowest things you sing in rehearsal
- Sing a variety of hymns that reflect a range of tempi, character, season, familiar, unfamiliar

Teach your children to use the hymnal
- Make it fun to search for a hymn
- Make them independent hymn singers

Hymn singing does not require organ accompaniment
Vary the instrumentation:
- sing with a guitar or band
- add an instrumental obbligato
- add free-ringing handbells
- Ferg: Orff orchestra

Select verses to sing a cappella or choir only
WHICH HYMNS (to sing)?

No limits, but consider starting with hymns that:

Have a refrain
- Come, Christians, Join to Sing
- To God Be the Glory
- Angels We Have Heard on High
- All Creatures of Our God and King
- They’ll Know We Are Christians By Our Love

Contain vivid imagery
- Earth and All Stars
- For the Beauty of the Earth
- Children of the Heavenly Father
- Angels from the Realms of Glory
- Away in a Manger

Are familiar to your congregation
- Joyful, Joyful We Are Thee
- O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing
- Holy, Holy, Holy
- Praise to the Lord the Almighty
- Christ the Lord is Risen Today

Contain action words and references to concrete items
- Now Thank We All Our God
- Go My Children with My Blessing
- For the Fruit of All Creation
- Hosanna, Loud Hosanna
- We Welcome Glad Easter

Are rhythmic
- Praise Him! Praise Him!
- Go Tell it on the Mountain
- He Lives!
- Brethren, We Have Net to Worship
WHICH HYMNS (to sing)? CONT.

Are drawn from world music
- Jesu, Jesu
- Oh Que Bueno Es Jesus
- Wind Song

Have catchy tunes
- LAND OF REST
- STAR OF COUNTY DOWN
- IN CHRIST ALONE
- BLESSED ASSURANCE
- COME YE SINNERS, POOR AND NEEDY

Move on to hymns that:
Have longer, more lyrical lines
- The Church’s One Foundation
- How Firm a Foundation
- O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus
- Speak, O Lord
- Holy God, We Praise Thy Name

Will generate conversation
- When the Morning Stars Together
- It is Well with My Soul
- Great is Thy Faithfulness
- Come Ye Disconsolate
- Search Me, O God

Are more through-composed (see above)
RESOURCES


Lift High the Cross. CD. Lynda Frey, conductor. Park Cities Presbyterian Church. [www.pcpc.org](http://www.pcpc.org)


_____. *Boom Tap-n-Play.* DVD. [www.visionpublications.net](http://www.visionpublications.net)
