



## “I Hear a Rainbow!”

“The things that children say and do may be God’s way of calling you.”<sup>1</sup>

by Helen Kemp

The things that children say and do may take only a few seconds of measured time to create a magic and memorable moment. I treasure these small scenes and enjoy recalling the wonder of the profound simplicity of childhood. I have discovered through decades of teaching that one must be on the *alert* to capture these fleeting moments. Don’t let them pass by unnoticed or unappreciated! There are, of course, those daily negative episodes that we choose not to remember, but in protecting ourselves from these constant annoyances, we forget to be on the *alert* for something wonderful, or thoughtful, or revealing, or profound that a child might say or do.

During a children’s choir festival weekend, I was asked to give the children’s sermon as part of morning worship. One of the anthems the choirs had learned was “I Never Touched a Rainbow.”<sup>2</sup> What made that anthem so special was the experience and expression of Amanda, the fourth grade chorister who was blind. The organist-choir master tried to think of a way to make this visual text

come alive for Amanda. During a rehearsal, he led Amanda to the organ console bench. He placed her fingers, 1, 3, 5 on a g b d triad and asked her to keep pressing the chord. Then he began to pull different stops, from very soft high flutes to oboes and harp sounds, changing timbres and sonorities. Amanda’s face was radiant with delight as she said, “I *hear* a rainbow!” What a magical experience!

In the children’s sermon, we tried to share Amanda’s discovery with all the children and the congregation. Each child was given a small, multi-colored construction paper rainbow mounted on a popsicle stick (to pique the interest of the littlest ones). To concentrate on their senses, they could *see* and *feel* and *hold* a make-believe rainbow. Then we asked them to close their eyes tightly and *listen* to rainbows of sounds. There was a ringing metallophone chord. We listened until the “colors” of the reverberation faded. Then there was a flute arpeggio flourish. Finally from the organ came a collage of wonderful sounds. The faces of the children were beautiful to watch as they imagined “hearing” rainbows. Even the ones who had to “peep” occasionally seemed to be listening intently to the colors.

When we opened our eyes again, we sang part of our song, “I Never Touched a Rainbow,” with a little more understanding and joy, all because of Amanda who said,

“I *hear* a rainbow!”

Magical moments are seldom earth-shaking, but certainly . . . heaven-sent.

. . . Helen Kemp

<sup>1</sup>Brian Wren, from “When Children Pray.” Written for the Children’s Choir, July 1993, Montreat Conference Center, Montreat, NC

<sup>2</sup>“I Never Touched a Rainbow” by Ruth Artman CGA355