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A Study Plan for

Philip R. Dietterich's "Come One, Come All, Come Follow"

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by Philip R. Dietterich

This simple "call and response" song was written to give children a part in a service commemorating the 200th anniversary of the United Methodist Church in Frankfort, Kentucky. I had completed music for trumpet and organ based upon "shaped-note" hymn melodies from *Kentucky Harmony*, Part I, 1816, to serve as prelude and postlude for this special service. Two festival anthems with words from the circuit rider Francis Asbury plus a choral call to worship and choral benediction were also finished. These drew upon the varied musical resources of the church: soloists and singers from the youth and adult choirs, handbell ringers, flute players, a pianist, and organist. But there was nothing for the children's choir!

As I searched through *Kentucky Harmony* I came upon this text:

Come, children, learn to fear the
Lord,
And that your days be long,
Let not a false nor spiteful word
Be found upon your tongue.

This inspired me to write a simple text and tune so that as many children as possible could participate. My four-year-old

granddaughter, Sarah, could join with other preschoolers and a nine or ten-year-old child could lead with the solo part.

The simple call and response format has been used since primitive times. One person sings a phrase and all repeat it. Many years ago, when church reformers sought to persuade whole congregations to sing, they created psalm tunes. These were melodies to which were set poetic paraphrases of the psalms. The psalm paraphrases and their melodies were sung line by line, first by the leader or *precentor* and then by the whole congregation.

To teach this song, you might invite the children to "echo" every sound you make, as you begin. Then you could have fun with the rhythm of the first phrase, speaking:

buh bum, buh bum, buh buh buh
buh bum

Then speak the text, using the rhythm of the song, keeping the beat, and repeating as indicated or slowing down as necessary.

Make the drill simple and fun! Where the children stumble or forget, "divide and conquer!" To musicians, this means chop the difficult phrases up into smaller portions and repeat (sometimes at a slower tempo) until

all can confidently produce them. This song has several phrases which might be chopped in two; for example, at the first rehearsal you might try:

Leader: Come one, come all,
Choir: come one, come all,
Leader: come follow the call,
Choir: come follow the call.
etcetera

Or the director may wish to teach a child to be the precentor, *modeling* the text and tune for the others. In Kentucky a very fine young singer sang the solo portions. The children repeated the choir parts imitating her good enunciation and tone quality.

This song is so simple, I believe that it could be used in an unrehearsed "children's time" in the service, with a child leading. It might also be sung as the reformers sang their psalms, with a child (or even the entire choir) serving as precentor, inviting the congregation to sing following the "leader," phrase by phrase. Or, of course, it may be sung exactly as published, dividing the choir into two equal parts for singing as Part I and Part II. However you sing it, enjoy it, and "share in his love every day!"

