

In its 40th Anniversary Year (1949-1989)
Choristers Guild Celebrates the Life of its Founder,
Ruth Krehbiel Jacobs, through "The Notebook"

Challenge

A Festival Talk to Parents

by Ruth Krehbiel Jacobs
Edited by Helen Kemp

Life was three dimensional long before the movies ever discovered the term. It has length, breadth, and sometimes depth.

Our concern seems to be in that order: Health - "How are you?"; Breadth, or mind - "Have you read so-and-so?"; but for Spirit - silence.

But it is spirit that makes one stand out in a crowd. Not one of the three areas is ever static; there is constant progress or retrogression.

This same emphasis is reflected in the care of our children. To the doctor for eyes, teeth, shots. To school - compulsory education. But for things of the spirit - "I don't want to force my child."

J. Edgar Hoover: "Shall I insist that my child go to Sunday School and church? YES. And with no further discussion about the matter." Startled? Why?

How do you answer Tommy when he comes to the breakfast table Monday morning and announces rebelliously, "I'm not going to school today." You know - he *goes*.

Why all this timidity, then, in the realm of spiritual guidance and growth? Going to let him wait and decide what church he'll go to, and when he's old enough? Quit your kidding. You didn't wait until he was old enough to decide whether or not he wished to go to school and get an education - or until he could make up his mind as to whether he wished to be a clean person or not.

Afraid he'll succumb to the old-wives' tale about "too much religion when he was young - parents-made-me-go" sort of gag? Look about you; the story is demonstrated and obviously false, despite its current popularity. Do you suppose because you insist, over his protests, that

Tommy take his bath tonight, he will turn into a Bath-less Groggins when he is twenty-one?

What shall we say when Tommy announces he doesn't like Sunday School and church? That's an easy one. Be *consistent*.

"Tommy, in our house we all attend Sunday School and church, and that includes you." Your firmness and example here furnish a bridge over which youthful rebellion may travel into rich and satisfying experiences in personal religious living.

The parents of America can strike a most effective blow against the forces which contribute to juvenile delinquency if the mothers and father will accompany their children to Sunday School and church regularly.

The conflicts and stresses of our day are greater than ever before in history. They are conflicts that hang

Thought for the month:

You don't have to do great things, but the little things you are doing in your sphere of influence can be done with great conviction, great wisdom, great beauty and great love.

(available on poster
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threateningly over everyone. Not the least one of us can escape the fog of fear that blots out the sky.

In its groping, the world has turned - as a last resort - to religion. Suddenly people outside the church are saying, with hope, that the only thing that can save the world is a practical application of the principles of Jesus. And they are turning to the church to produce that kind of leadership.

But the church, too, has been groping, often losing sight of its goal: a generation of people, leaders and followers, with *sound education* in the principles of Christianity, a *conviction* of the value of those principles, and the *stamina* to live by them.

To approach that goal, we need to make every educational resource of the church productive. Frequently one of the most subtle powers within the church - the choir - is overlooked.

Children of today have so many secular organizations playing for their time, that the church is frequently crowded out completely. It is not surprising that a child should think of the church as the place where the Cubs or Brownies meet. It is difficult for me to understand how the church can so casually sell its birthright for a mess of pottage. The children's choir can - and should - use as wide a range of activities as any secular organization. It can provide recreation, drama, craftwork, opportunity for personal achievement, not to mention a sound musical education. And, there is something else that the choir, *and the choir only*, can do.

It can deepen religious awareness through a responsible part in the service of worship. If it is true that 85% of the Episcopal clergy started their training as choir boys, we need no further proof of the influence the choir has in molding the thoughts and lives of the child.

A sound, controlling personal religion cannot be inherited. In that area, every successful person is a self-made person, who must find and develop his or her

own peace of mind and heart. The concentrated quiet that a good choir imposes on its members during the worship service is the finest seed-bed for the growth of religious maturity. There will be occasional moments when worship suddenly becomes more than a formal pattern of words to the boy or girl, and those moments will be a greater influence for the inclusion of religion in his or her life than the most convincing of reasoned arguments.

The church school, of course, bears the chief responsibility for education, but only the choir offers the chance for expressing beliefs and aspirations and devotion in public worship.

Only recently have we begun to sense the enormous influence for character building in the children's choir. But like soil, it must be tended before it will produce. A fine director can do a great deal, but only when director, parents, church and minister work together, with a common purpose and a common vision, will their efforts produce the rare fruit buried in the seed.

And for a touch of humor:

Be careful about calling yourself an "expert." One definition is that an "ex" is a has-been, and a "spurt" is a drip under pressure.

This festival today represents one of the most promising seedlings springing up across the country. That seedling is the germ of a moving power, not only in this church and this community, but beyond . . . a power determining the direction of civilization.

The greatest factor in any situation is its POTENTIAL, and no one has ever begun to suspect the potential in the children's choir - for the children - the church - the future.

This festival talk from Ruth Jacobs' Notebook is evidence of the deep faith and fervor with which the Choristers Guild was founded. When Ruth was doing many workshops and festivals, between 1949 and 1956, she began putting materials into a sort of lecture notebook. Most of the pages were written in her own very small hand-writing. Here were ideas and plans for the future of the Guild, poetry, anthem lists, questions from directors, reviews of theological and educational books and lectures which served to stimulate her inquiring mind. Humor, too, is given honor with several pages of quotes and jokes from church bulletins.

But most exciting is the evidence of her profound commitment to the purpose and potential of children's choirs - for the children, the church and the future.

. . . Helen Kemp