

## I Will Give Thanks

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

by Helen Kemp

Early in January, moms and dads are encouraging their children to write thank you notes to grandparents and friends who have given gifts at Christmas. Most children, of course, don’t think of that themselves! It takes an “encourager” or even a “commander” to get that task accomplished. But what a joy it is to the recipient of a thank you note from a child. Many of those pencil-written notes are displayed lovingly on refrigerator doors or are kept for years in a special place—to be read over and over with great delight.

That is certainly the case with me. I have kept boxes of letters from children, whose choir directors probably said, “We are all going to write Mrs. Kemp a thank you note for coming to direct our festival,” and the children have asked,

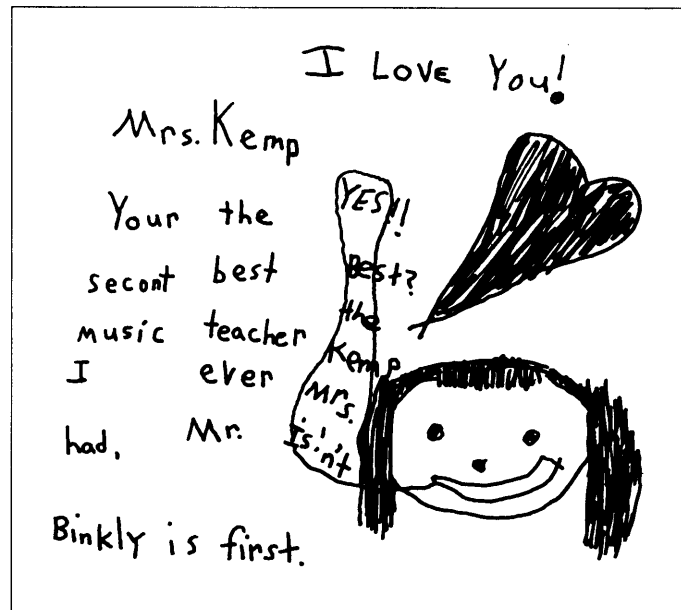
What shall we say?  
Can I draw a picture?  
Does it have to be long?  
Who is Mrs. Kemp?

The results of such an assignment are often heart-warming expressions of appreciation, telling which songs they loved, and what funny things they like about the rehearsals. Their art illustrations often reveal what things they especially remember. I have learned a great deal from their truthful observations, and about the individuality of their written verbal communication! I also learned that “Festival” is a difficult word to spell if you “sound it out” phonetically. The unedited variations are wonderfully creative! Here are a few gleaned from the uncorrected thank you notes which I treasure:

festibul	festivel
festvul	festubul
festoval	fesivul
festibill	festavle

Interestingly, when the word is spelled correctly, it has often been erased and tried several different ways. The notes I selected are written by younger elementary children and are delightfully expressive (and brief) in their unedited state.

The point of this vignette is to suggest a January “thank you” campaign. Perhaps a choir parent needs a note of appreciation from the children. Or what about your minister, pastor or rector? To encourage a child to say “thank you” by



writing a note is a twice-blessed gift. To the children you are giving the gift of expression of gratitude, and to the recipient, a loving lift for the spirit. It’s a win-win experience. Even Ann Landers would commend you for encouraging your choristers to write those thank you notes to Grandmas, Grandpas, and all the others who have given gifts.

I have included a few notes from my treasure box of valued mementos. I couldn’t find one of my favorite ones which was obviously an assignment at rehearsal. This lad did the task obediently, but the last sentence revealed his honesty in five words!

*Dear Mrs. Kemp,*

*Thank you for directing our festival.  
You were great. The songs were good.  
I'm sorry I wasn't there.*

*Tommy*

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