

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

# The Special Place of the Children's Choir in the Church

by Ruth Krehbiel Jacobs  
Edited by Helen Kemp

*A note from Helen:*

*Many of the pages in The Notebook were in the form of an outline, which Ruth Jacobs used as a basis for classes and lectures. This month we share one of her most frequently used outlines. With her winsome and often witty delivery, she would enhance, embellish and bring to life her sparse outline with significant sage advice. Yes, "sage" is a fitting adjective for Ruth, since it means "eminent wisdom, especially gained through experience and reflection."*

. . . Helen Kemp

- I. Three elements combined
  - A. The educational psychology of public school music
  - B. The tone of a fine boy choir
  - C. The objectives of the church school
- II. No two situations alike
  - A. Families of diverse socio-economic conditions
  - B. Musical or unmusical home and community environments
  - C. The quality of the public school music
  - D. Size of church school
  - E. Cooperation of parents and officials
  - F. Experience and focus of the director
  - G. Transportation will determine time and arrangement of rehearsals
- H. Age range and divisions
- I. Needs and types of programs will vary
- J. Start where the people are
- III. The director
  - A. Once started, run the race and finish the course
  - B. Carry on with conviction
    - 1. Against demanding parents
    - 2. Against inertia

*Our forebearers were church members, Nineteen hundred years or so, And to every new suggestion They have always answered, "No."*
  - C. Be mature
    - 1. Calm
    - 2. Fair
    - 3. Firm
- D. Be knowledgeable about
  - 1. Music
  - 2. Voices
  - 3. Teaching methods
  - 4. Christian education
- E. Communicate love of
  - 1. Children
  - 2. Life
  - 3. Music
  - 4. God
- F. Be committed to the value of the work
- IV. Discipline
  - A. Expect things of the children
    - 1. "Our director doesn't make us, but expects us . . ."
    - 2. The power of positive attitude
  - B. Think in terms of developmental growth
    - 1. All children are different. Know their background

2. Children learn through
  - a. Exposure
  - b. Repetition
  - c. Cumulative understanding
- C. Establish objectives
  1. Choristers understand the meaning of choir membership
  2. Service responsibilities
  3. Special events
- D. Dignify the work of the choristers
  1. Instill in the choristers dedication to the purposes of choir
  2. Encourage recognition by the congregation of choir's contributions to worship
  3. Teach respect for vestments, hymnals and service folders
- E. Plan rehearsals carefully (structure and variety)
  1. Establish habits
    - a. Opening ritual
    - b. Seating arrangement
  2. Keep rehearsals moving
  3. Attempt to modify unacceptable behavior
    - a. Substitute positive action for negative behavior
    - b. Private conference with child
    - c. Temporary separation from group
    - d. Contact parents, with child's knowledge
- F. Let choristers know you care about them as individuals
  1. Keep careful attendance records
    - a. Visible attendance chart
    - b. Follow up on absences
  2. Send birthday cards
  3. Get to know each child as a special person

## *Thought for the month:*

The successful children's choir program grows out of the individual circumstances at each church. Your problems are your opportunities.

In working with children, develop that special ability to be more easily amused than annoyed.

(from Ruth Jacobs' notebook)