

God's Children Sing

# Friends in God's World



Lesson Guide with Activities  
For Children Ages 3 to 5 Years

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## ***God's Children Sing***

Materials for Children from 15 months to 3½ years:

*God, My Family and Me*

*God's Wonderful World*

Materials for Children from 3 to 5 years:

*Friends in God's World*

*Friends of Jesus*

This book is part of **Teacher Resources** for *Friends in God's World*, consisting of:

- Lesson Guide with Activities: 56 page book including 15 lesson suggestions with complete instructions
- *Focused Listening* CD, 93 listening examples with 16 full-color illustrated cards
- *Tap, Dance, and Move* CD, 28 selections
- *Living With Music at Home*: 32-page book of activities with notes for parents on how to make music part of their home life
- *Friends in God's World* CD, 31 songs, dances, chants, poems – musical activities from the lessons

## **The Musikgarten Music and Movement Series**

<i>Family Music for Babies</i>	- for Children from birth to 18 months
<i>Family Music for Toddlers</i>	- for Children from 15 months to 3½ years
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<i>Music Makers: At Home in the World</i>	- for Children from 4 to 6 years
<i>Music Makers: Around the World</i>	- for Children from 5 to 7 years
<i>Music Makers: At the Keyboard</i>	- for Children from 5 to 9 years
<i>God's Children Sing</i>	- for Children from 15 months to 5 years

### **Additional Programs**

**For children from birth to age four:**

*My Musical World*

*Nature's Music*

**For children ages four to seven:**

*My Neighborhood Community*

*Seashore*

*Nature Trail*

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## ***Friends in God's World***

### **Lesson Guide with Activities**

*Friends in God's World* contains 15 lesson suggestions and the accompanying materials for working with children ages 3 to 5 years. The activities are appropriate to be the basis of a 45 minute period with a group of 8-12 children meeting once a week. Parents can be part of this class, however, the activities are not dependent on the presence of one adult for each child. Each lesson is centered around a scripture reading and a related story. *Friends in God's World* focuses on stories from the Old Testament. In the *God's Children Sing* publication there is a second set of lessons for this age group, *Friends of Jesus*, with stories from the New Testament.

### **Introduction**

"Children live in a world of dreams and visions; they take chances and create. Until we teach them otherwise, they believe they can paint, dance, act, sing, and significantly, they enjoy doing so. Children openly expose their emotions and learn from experience. They find miracles believable and desirable. They can sense the presence of God, for they live in a world of gifts as well as achievements. They can imagine the Kingdom of God, for they live in seen and unseen worlds." (John H. Westerhoff, *Bringing Up Children in the Christian Faith*, pp. 20-21.)

*God's Children Sing* reaches out to all adults whose lives intersect the lives of young children, whether in the role of teacher, parent, or caregiver. Through this publication you are invited to re-enter the faith-filled world of childhood. What is this world; how does it exist? How does the child perceive the world? How does faith develop in the life of the child?

### **For the young, life is a celebration**

For the young child every day is new, fresh, exciting, and filled with new people, things, and events. Events that appear prosaic and ordinary to us as adults are a never-ending source of wonder and engagement for the child. With no sense of time but the present, the child lives each moment completely. The smallest happening is a momentous event for which there is no precedent in his/her life experience.

Children's intuitive intelligence is superbly tuned to the living world around them. They possess an extraordinary capacity for assimilation and have an innate ability to observe the tiniest things which hardly even exist for the adult. These capacities of early childhood will never be repeated in life with the same clarity and ease. The child's perception of and identification with all life forms and events will never again be possible with the same spontaneous enthusiasm.

Every young child has a sense of the sacred; if it is part of a parent/family model, it has a chance to blossom. The gift of faith is given to the child as well as to the adult. The spontaneity, creativity, and openness of childhood allow the child to experience God intuitively in relationships with others and with the natural world they encounter. Through these relationships, the child grows in knowledge of God and the child's faith grows as it is experienced with significant adults and in the Christian community.

## Sharing our faith provides the central theme for the activities.

*God's Children Sing* draws its central themes from the sharing of our faith with children and aims to bring the family into the music, movement, and faith experience. John H. Westerhoff set forth the following five guidelines for sharing our faith with children in his book *Bringing Up Children in the Christian Faith*:

“We need to tell and retell the biblical story – the stories of the faith – together.

We need to celebrate our faith and our lives.

We need to pray together.

We need to listen and talk to each other.

We need to perform faithful acts of service and witness together.” (p. 36)

Through music, movement, story-telling, and praying experiences of parent and child together, the faith of both can be strengthened, enhanced, and enlivened. Opportunities for sharing the life of faith can be encouraged through songs, dance, and creative expressions, which are such a natural part of the young child's world.

Coming to know God as the Creator and Sustainer of all living things is encouraged through hands-on experiences and encounters with nature. To “know” a child must “touch.” A child's natural sense of wonder at plants, birds, animals, and insects leads him/her to explore and discover the world in which he/she lives and the God who created it.

This resource book presents materials for designing experiences that promote musical development in young children within the context of nurturing their life of faith. Through joyful participation in songs, stories, music-making, movement activities, and moments of worship in each lesson, young children will become more aware of God's love for them and for all of Creation. As a result of these musical activities experienced in a Christian community and family, children will grow to give voice to their developing musical expression, faith, and praise of God.

## The Lessons

The lessons are structured to be the basis of a 45 meeting once a week. The activities are designed to encourage joyful participation by both the child and the accompanying parent or caregiver; however, they are not dependent on the presence of one adult for each child. When the children experience the security of their presence in class, they can be relaxed, comfortable, and ready to learn. By experiencing the activities with the children, parents come to a fuller understanding of the value of the experience and are more ready to facilitate musical play at home. The children are allowed to respond in ways that are comfortable to them and are not required to meet expectations of others.

Many activities promote interaction between the child and the adult. Children and adults act together in a group, singing, dancing and playing instruments, providing not only enjoyable music and movement experiences but facilitating eye-to-eye contact, close body contact, joy in the shared experience.

Other activities are designed to encourage the growing independence of the child. During the thematic portions of the lessons, the teacher will work part of the time just with the children, separated from the adults. The adults observe, and join in after a few minutes. Whether hearing a story, going forth to get an instrument, coming to the listening place, repeating a rhythmic or melodic pattern individually, or taking a turn on an instrument, the child takes steps toward becoming an independent person. Invite individual adults to stay close to their children, if needed.

Over time children and adults learn the joys of coming together for a group activity, especially when music is involved! The Listening Time, the Scripture Reading, Prayers and Singing Game at the end of the lesson encourage their incipient sense of the faith community.

## Lesson Suggestions

The Lesson Suggestions are intended as a guide for the teacher. The activities have been carefully chosen and sequenced according to the developmental needs of the children. Interspersing quiet and active times suits the children's growing capacity to really listen, to inhibit their movement, and then to relax and move about.

In the Lesson Suggestions we have attempted to:

- balance movement, vocal, listening, and playing activities;
- carefully plan the sequence according to children's movement needs;
- allow for ample repetition from one lesson to another;
- balance activities that promote independent action and those that lead to group involvement.

In constructing the lessons, the authors have specifically considered two basic formats:

- use by a music specialist meeting a group of children once a week for 45 minutes;
- use by a classroom, music or Sunday school teacher making music a part of the daily program.

### Use in a once-a-week class.

Each lesson includes the following important elements:

- A song of greeting in which each child is named.
- Movement games for beat competency; finger plays; songs that emphasize body parts; activities that encourage stationary movement, traveling movement, and expressive movement; and singing games and dances.
- Varied vocal activities: easy-to-sing songs, voice-building activities, call-and-respond songs, patterns, and songs in major, minor and church modes.
- Listening activities: listening examples or games, listening to recorded music (songs, dance music, or stories,) and poetry.
- Activities that include playing instruments and working with accessories such as hoops and scarves.
- Opportunities for children to make suggestions, by improvising the text, sounds, or movements.
- A closing song.

### Use through the week in the early childhood classroom.

Every classroom is organized to meet the specific needs of the situation. The following ideas are offered so that you can feel comfortable with adjusting the lesson plans while paying close attention to balancing the needs of the children, as suggested above:

- Divide the material suggested for each week into two or three music-circle periods.
- Plan each music-circle time to be 20-25 minutes long and to include a variety of activities: singing, beat development, movement, listening, and a special focus.
- Plan the sequence carefully to be sure that there is enough variety, movement, and activities in which all the children can be involved.
- Repeat single activities throughout the week, at times when they would fill a special need or when the children request them.

### Follow the children

The authors encourage you to use these lesson suggestions as a point of departure. Each meeting with children will have its own dynamic, its own needs. You may wish to use the lesson suggestions simply as the basic structure to plan your own lessons. Keeping the developmental needs of the children in mind, observe them carefully and adjust your lesson plans to the golden opportunities that children always present to us. Keep the wonder alive.

## Listening

Listening activities have two primary goals: to develop auditory acuity and memory, and to focus attention and listening ability. Consider the following guidelines:

- Invite the children to come together in a designated listening area. Remind them that “in the listening corner you will need your ears.” Allow them to sit comfortably, as close as possible to the sound source.
- Tell them what sounds they will hear, for example, “We are going to listen to the voice of a cicada.”
- Play one section of the recording; listen to the responses of the children (after you have stopped the recording). Ask the children some questions, such as “How did the cicada sound?” Invite the children to imitate the sound. You may want to play the selection again.
- *Friends in God’s World* includes 2 sets of four listening cards. Present the cards in the following steps:
  1. Name the animals or instruments, one at a time, showing the illustration. Listen to the children’s comments, add some of your own and repeat the identification at the end.
  2. Ask the children to identify the picture when you name the animal or instrument. Mix the card order every time you repeat the exercise.
  3. Point to an illustration and ask the children to name it.
  4. Announce which sound you are going to play. Hold up the picture, and play the recording.
  5. Encourage vocal imitation of the sound.

## Prayers

Prayers bring the child into communication with God. Through “talking with God,” the child begins to build a relationship with God that is special to his/her own level of understanding. By encouraging children to participate in the prayer life of a faith community, children begin to feel a sense of identity and belonging in the community.

Each lesson contains a prayer time following the singing game. The prayers should use simple language and relate to the central theme for the lesson. A sense of ceremony and awe is appropriate to make this a special time of sharing. Encourage everyone to hold hands together in the circle.

Some lessons suggest a specific prayer. If a specific prayer is not listed, a response form of praying is suggested, where each phrase is spoken by the teacher and then repeated by either the children or by the children and adults. The prayers should consist of several short phrases, such as:

Dear God, (*children repeat*)  
 Thank you for making a wonderful world, (*children repeat*)  
 With crickets and cicadas, (*children repeat*)  
 With bees and beautiful flowers, (*children repeat*)  
 And with prickly and tickly things. (*children repeat*)  
 Help us remember to take care of your world, (*children repeat*)  
 Amen. (*children repeat*)

When the children are more experienced, they may be invited to give suggestions for prayers or to lead the group in prayer.

## Dance and Recorded Movement Stories

The *Tap, Dance and Move* recording includes several dances of various kinds. Invite adults and children to join you in moving freely to the music. Parents and children may dance together holding hands, dance individually, or in small groups with other children and parents.

The recorded movement activities combine listening and moving in a new dimension. The music suggests actions to express a story line. The dual role of the ear – the auditory (listening) and the vestibular (movement) functions – is thus greatly enhanced when the children’s feeling response to the music is expressed in movement.

## Patterns

Rhythm and tonal patterns should be built into every lesson. They give the child the possibility to hear and practice brief motifs which can easily be remembered. Patterns are understandable building blocks for children, with which they can later create their own music.

Through playing with rhythm and tonal patterns the child builds his/her own musical vocabulary. The experience with patterns leads to the understanding of musical syntax - pitch and rhythm. Syntax in music, the sequence of tones and rhythms in a phrase, is the counterpoint to syntax in language, the sequence of words in a sentence. Just as language is learned from sounds to words and later to writing and reading, so musical understanding begins first with musical patterns and develops later to an understanding within a wider framework and on many levels.

Patterns of every kind are of interest to children. From experience we know that even the youngest children enjoy echoing short rhythmic and tonal patterns. Often children who otherwise do not yet sing individually or even those who do not speak at all will take part in the echo pattern games. Start out with echo games for the group. Note the following:

- Practice your patterns before you teach them.
- Speak or sing the patterns musically and expressively.
- Keep the patterns simple, so that both children and adults can experience success and joy.

After a few weeks invite individual children to offer an answer. Use a hand gesture or an object such as a rhythm stick (microphone) to indicate whose turn it is. When you start individual patterns remember:

- Not all children will be ready to take a solo turn. The child should be allowed to choose to do this activity and not be pushed to participate.
- Many children wish to come to the teacher; others prefer to answer while sitting with their adult partner.
- Accept each child's answer. It is always correct, even though it may not be an echo of your phrase. If the child's echo differs from your pattern, take time to echo the child's pattern.
- Adjust the difficulty of your pattern to the needs of the individual child.

## Rhythm Patterns

The first experience with echoing patterns should be on a neutral syllable, such as "ba, ba." This syllable gives a clear starting point to the sound and is an easy syllable for young children to form. As the children build their vocabulary of rhythm patterns and become comfortable and more accurate doing them individually, change to a rhythm language.

The neutral syllable is appropriate for children ages 15 months to 3 years. If 3 year olds have had considerable experience with the neutral syllable, it is appropriate to introduce a rhythm language. When starting with children 4 years and older, a few weeks on the neutral syllable may suffice before changing to a rhythm language.

Remember the following:

- Keep the patterns of any one lesson in the same meter (duple or triple).
- Be sure to alternate between duple and triple meter over several weeks.
- At first chant patterns which are 2 beats long; later extend the patterns to 4 beats.
- Do approximately 4-6 patterns in a series.
- It is helpful to use the meter of the previous song or chant as the basis for the patterns.
- Set the beat by tapping lightly with both hands on your knees.
- Procedure: All keep the beat going without interruption. The teacher chants one pattern. The group repeats without pause. The teacher chants the next pattern, without leaving out a beat. The group answers. Continue, following this procedure.

**Friends in God's World****Lesson Suggestions****WEEK 1****Materials**

Rhythm sticks

Hoops

Jingles

Cards: Seal, Meadowlark, Red Fox, Katydid

FGW-CD (Friends in God's World)

FL-CD (Focused Listening)

TDM-CD (Tap, Dance and Move)

<b>Title</b>	<b>Function</b>	<b>CD in class</b>	<b>CD as reference</b>	<b>Parent Book</b>
Come and Sing Together	Greeting song			
Major	Tonal patterns			
Clap Your Hands	Praise, body awareness			
Triple	Rhythm patterns			
Genesis 1: 1-4a	Scripture, response			
Bluehill	Steady beat music, Rhythm sticks	TDM, #16		
I'm a-Rolling	Traveling movement, Hoops			
God Made the World	Bible story, call-and-respond			10
The Creation	Recorded movement story	TDM, #17	FGW, #7	11
Seal, Meadowlark, Red Fox, Katydid	Listening time	FL, #55-58		
Who Made Ocean, Earth, and Sky?	Call-and-respond		FGW, #5	9
<b>Conclude with 1 or more of the following activities:</b>				
Great Big Stars	Jingles		FGW, #13	14
Stars	Poetry		FGW, #4	8
Psalms 8	Stationary movement		FGW, #11	12
This Little Light of Mine	Singing game			
Burning Bright	Prayer		FGW, #12	13
Come and Sing Together (Go Well and Go Safely)	Closing song			



**Come and Sing Together****Zulu Parting Song**

F Major



Vs. 2 Sing hello to (name), (3 times)  
We've come to praise the Lord.

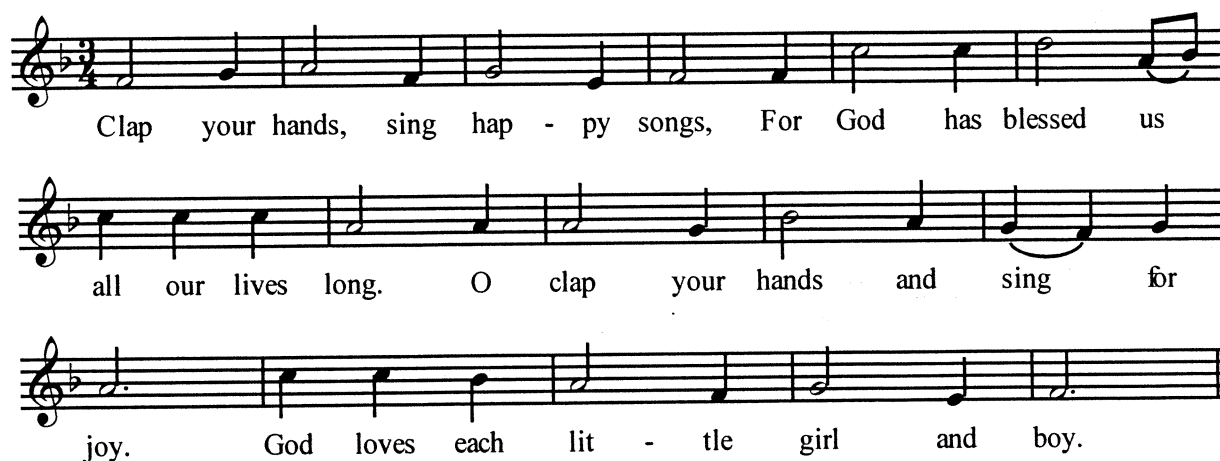
Vs. 3 Go well and go safely, (3 times)  
The Lord be ever with you.

- Sing Verse 1 of the song, tapping your knees lightly with your fingertips.
- Insert a child's name into Verse 2 of the song. You may use one name for the entire verse or several names in a verse, depending on the size of the class.
- Change the beat motion frequently (such as rub, clap, nod, etc.) and use the word in the verse accordingly.

**Clap Your Hands****12<sup>th</sup> Century French Carol**

F Major

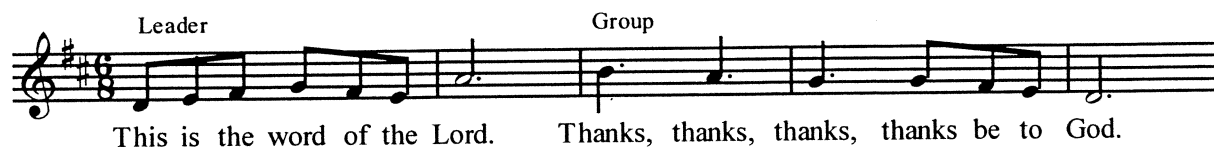
Text Adapted from the Psalms



- Sing the song expressively, gently clapping the beat.
- Encourage the children to make up additional verses, such as "Nod your head" and "Tap your toes," and sing the song with each new movement.

**Response to Scripture****Catherine Mathia**

D Major



# Index

Title	Pg.	FGW CD	Other CDs TDM	Title	Pg.	FGW CD	Other CDs
All Things Dance with Joy	19		15	Prayer	6		
Animals in God's Creation	13	6-9	FL 55-58	Prickly, Tickly	21		
Bees			FL 61	Psalm 104	20		
Bluehill		16	TDM	Psalm 150	42		
Burning Bright	16	9	16	Psalm 8	15	8	
Cicada			FL 60	Rain			FL 64
Clap Your Hands	11			Rain, Rain, Go Away	29		
Come and Go	46	31		Recorder		23	FL 75
Come and Sing Together	11			Red Fox		6	FL 57
Come and Sing Your Praise	41			Renaissance Dance		26	TDM 19
Creation, The	12	7	TDM 17	Response to Scripture	11		
Cricket			FL 62	Samuel Listens to God	34		
Drum		23	FL 76	See, Can't You Jump	31	32	
Flower, The	21		TDM	Shepherd Boy Sings, A	42		
Give Me Oil in My Lamp	33	1	20	Shout			FL 71
God Before Me	47	28		Sing			FL 72
God is Calling	36	20		Snail	24		
God Made the World	13			Somebody's Knocking	38		
God's Special Gift	19			Sound Rattles	51		
Great Big Stars	14	10		Speak			FL 70
Harbor Seal		6	FL 55	Stars	15	4	
Harp		23	FL 74	Stars Shining	22	3	
Hush, Hush, Somebody's	35	19		Tap, Tap, Tap	47	30	TDM 21
I Thank you God	24	21		Thank God for Rain	29		
I Will Give Thanks	31			Thankful am I	44		
I'm a Rolling	12			This Is my Commandment	49		
Katydid		6	FL 58	This Little Light of Mine	16		
Listening Time	6			Thunder			FL 66 TDM
Little David, Play	43	24		Toumba	28	14	18
Lord Is My Shepherd, The	46	2		Trumpet		23	FL 77
Love God and Your Neighbor	51			Wake Me! Shake Me!	36	22	
Loving Family, A	50			Walk Along, John	33	29	
Meadowlark		6	FL 56	Walking in the Green Grass	24	12	
Morning Praise	41	25		Whisper			FL 69
Noah's Ark	27	13		Who are You?	43		
Now I Lay me Down	35	17		Who Built the Ark?	28		
O Little Children	49	27		Who Made Ocean, Earth and Sky?	14	5	
Open the Window, Noah	29	15		Wind			FL 65
Patterns	7			Wise	22	11	
Praise God with Instruments			FL 74-77	With God	33	18	