

## Hymns for All: Singing Without Accompaniment

by Lena Breen and Lynn Ungar

In small congregations that don't have an accompanist or in small groups that don't need one, in worship that includes children and in worship that invites livelier participation—throughout church life there are opportunities to sing songs whose words and melodies are simple enough that they don't require the help of written music and a pianist. *Singing the Living Tradition* provides a wealth of resources for those who want to incorporate a cappella singing into the life of their congregation. Below are some recommendations of songs that work well with people of all ages, divided out by the type of songs and tips for leading them. They are not intended to be comprehensive lists, just suggestions of our favorites, so if you enjoy these, keep bringing in more. In all cases, the most important rule is that people should be encouraged to sing lustily and enjoy!

**Chants** have simple melodies, and are designed to be sung repeatedly. Don't be afraid to keep going long enough for everyone to actually feel the power of the shared song! Chants often work well with drumming, but require someone who can keep a steady beat. They are not the sort of songs that work well with just handing out rhythm instruments to anyone who cares to grab one. Some examples are:

- #180 Alhamdullilah
- #366 Heleluyan
- #387 The Earth, the Water, the Fire, the Air

**Call and Response** songs are traditionally led by someone who sings out a line, which the congregation sings back. Having a strong leader helps, but this method makes it very easy for all to participate.

- #116 I'm On My Way

**Zipper Songs** have a line or phrase that "zips" out, and is replaced each time through, giving you as many verses as you like without having to read along or learn something new. These songs generally don't need to be taught—if you don't know them when you start, you'll catch on in a moment or two!

- #100 I've Got Peace Like a River
- #200 Glory, Glory, Hallelujah
- #348 Guide My Feet
- #357 Bright Morning Stars
- #361 Enter, Rejoice and Come In
- #407 We're Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table

**Songs with Hand Gestures** are particularly fun for young kids, but don't underestimate the power of movement for people of all ages. You don't need to know the "right" movements for a song—just put it whatever makes sense to you.

#118 This Little Light of Mine

#402 From You I Receive, To You I Give

**Two Part Songs** can be taught by dividing the group in half, left and right, or, if you're more adventurous, dividing the parts men/women, high voice/low voice, etc. Each side or group then only has to learn one part. Teach the groups separately, then have one group go through the song all the way through, and have the second group come in as they repeat it.

#368 Now Let Us Sing

**Rounds** are a wonderful way of singing in harmony without anyone having to learn an extra part. It is important that unfamiliar rounds be taught line by line so that everyone is comfortable with the song before you break into parts. It helps to have one person to lead each part, and is imperative that the leaders listen closely to each other to make sure that everyone is keeping in time. Large groups can break these songs into three or four parts, but even small groups can sing in two parts, provided you have a couple of strong leaders and not too large a percentage of young children.

#188 Come, Come, Whoever You Are

#362 Rise Up, O Flame

#393 Jubilate Deo

#394 Hava Nashira

#413 Go Now in Peace