

Sing the Stories  
of God's NEW People

Twenty-Five More Songs  
for the Youngest Singers

Words by Mary Nelson Keithahn

Music by John D. Horman

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# Sing the Stories of God's New People

## *Performance tracks*

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- 4 God's New People Share
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- 6 Philip and the Man in the Chariot
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# Preface

After completing our first two collections of songs for young children, *Sing the Stories of Jesus* (Augsburg Fortress, 978-0-8006-7945-3) and *Sing the Stories of God's People* (Augsburg Fortress, 978-0-8066-9839-7), we decided a third group of songs based on stories and writings in Acts, the Epistles, and Revelation was needed. Many of these stories are told in church school to illustrate concepts and faith practices that are important in faith development. Poetic texts based on these stories, set to rhythmic melodies, help children enjoy and remember these concepts. Carefully written tunes provide opportunities for children to develop musical skills that prepare them for active participation in congregational and choral song in later life. When the story-songs are coordinated with the Revised Common Lectionary, they offer children a chance to contribute meaningfully to worship, as leaders rather than entertainers.

*Sing the Stories of God's New People* reflects the holistic approach we have each used in working with young children through worship, music, and education. In choosing the stories for the songs, we consulted Bible storybooks and church school curriculum resources published by several denominations for ages 4 to 7. Although Bible storybooks for younger children have often focused on the Hebrew scriptures and the Gospels, newer books are including more stories from the rest of the New Testament. Examples cited in the teaching plans are the *Spark Story Bible*, published by Augsburg Fortress in 2009 (ISBN 978-9-8066-7049-2); the *Children of God Storybook Bible, retold by Archbishop Desmond Tutu*, published by Zondervan in 2010 (ISBN 978-0-31071912-0); and *The Children's Illustrated Bible, stories retold by Selina Hastings*, published in 1994 by Dorling Kindersley Ltd., London (ISBN 1-56458-472-0).

The twenty-five songs in this collection will introduce children to members of the early Christian community, important events in their lives, and issues they faced as Christians. As the children learn about these persons through these songs, you may want to add their names to a list of "God's New People" as a visual reminder of how important each one was in telling the good news about Jesus. Also, note that several stories offer opportunities to talk with the children about the meaning of baptism.

The lyrics of the songs are simple in language and focus on a key idea in each story. Although not all of the songs are based on stories found in the Revised Common Lectionary, they may still be useful in worship as an introduction to a related story or support for a theme in a lectionary reading.

The tunes are short and memorable; they use the six to eight note range appropriate for children in this age group and contain repeated tones, step-by-step intervals, and sequences for easy learning. There are opportunities for the children to listen and echo what a leader sings, and to add rhythm instruments to the accompaniments. Some of the songs work well as anthems for a primary choir. Others can be dramatized "live" or with puppets.

For each song, we provide creative suggestions for teaching the words and melodies. Also included is a CD recording with both the full chorus and accompaniment-only versions. These recordings may be duplicated for non-sale, local use so that children can sing along at home, in the car, or in the classroom. We hope that this third collection will help you continue to offer children a way to grow in their faith through the songs they sing.

- Mary Nelson Keithahn and John D. Horman

# God's New People

Acts 2:41-47

“Jesus is no longer dead.  
He is risen!” Peter said.  
Many listened and believed,  
then the Spirit's power received.  
They were baptized then and there,  
and began to meet for prayer.  
They broke bread and sang God's praise,  
shared their love in many ways.  
They were God's New People!

The Day of Pentecost is often called the birthday of the church. Introduce the song to the children something like this: After God's Holy Spirit had come to Jesus' friends, Peter told the people, “Jesus is no longer dead. He is risen!” The people listened and believed. Peter baptized them and they began to meet regularly to pray and eat and sing God's praises together. They also shared God's love in many ways. They were God's New People, and the day of Pentecost was their birthday.

The contrast between shorter, faster notes and longer, extended notes is the most obvious musical focal point in this song. When you introduce the first phrase or two, have the children pat their knees on eighth notes, clap their hands on quarter notes, and slide their hands on their thighs for half notes. When a note is dotted, simply say “dot.” For example, as you sing the first line, you would:

*pat-pat pat-pat pat-pat slide \_\_ pat-pat clap clap pat-pat slide \_\_ dot*

Once these differences in note values are established, the extended notes in measures 20-27 will be easier to remember.

*Optional:* Bring decorated cupcakes as a special birthday treat after you have learned the song.

## **Lectionary**

*Year A, Easter 4*

## **Storybook**

*Spark Story Bible, “Early Believers,” pp. 504-505.*

# God's New People

Mary Nelson Keithahn

John D. Horman

**With conviction** (♩ = 84) *mf*

Voices

Piano

*mf*

“Je - sus is no long - er

5  
dead, he is ri - sen!” Pe - ter said. Man - y lis - tened and be -

9  
lieved, then the Spir - it's pow'r re - ceived. They were bap - tized then and

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# Paul Writes Letters

## 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

When Paul could not be with his friends,  
 he wrote to them instead.  
 His letters helped them understand  
 what Jesus did and said.  
 Paul's letters, written long ago,  
 still help us learn today  
 how Jesus would want us to live  
 and follow in his way.

In this age of electronic communications, when even young children send e-mails, the stamped, addressed envelopes their parents and grandparents used to mail at a post office may be as foreign to them as the scrolls of Paul's day! However, they will probably have seen a letter but never a scroll, so it would be helpful to have a picture of one to share, or a model made from shelf paper fastened on dowel sticks, rolled up from both ends to the middle, and tied with a string.

Read the story "Paul's Letters" or simply comment that Paul often wrote letters to his friends. Then explain: Paul probably wrote his letters on a long piece of parchment, a kind of paper made from the skins of sheep or goats. The parchment was fastened at both ends to sticks so it could be rolled up and tied to keep it safe. This kind of letter was called a "scroll." There were no post offices where Paul could mail his scrolls, so he had to depend on travelers to carry them to his friends. Paul's friends treasured his letters, and some of them are in the Bible we use today.

Show them where Paul's letters can be found in the New Testament: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus.

The form of this tune is ABAB<sup>1</sup>. Lines 1-2 and 5-6 of the text are sung to the same melody (A). Although the melodies for Lines 3-4 and 7-8 of the text start out the same way, they end differently (B and B<sup>1</sup>). When children are aware of repetition in a song, they find it easier to remember. However, when melodic segments have different words in the repetition, they are sometimes confused as to whether the segments sound the same. For that reason, teach the melody of this song on a neutral syllable such as "la" or "doo" before adding the text. This will make it easier for the children to recognize the segments that are repeated, and those that start the same but end differently. Add the words after the children are comfortable with the melody.

### Lectionary

*Year A, Epiphany 2*

### Storybooks

*The Children's Illustrated Bible: stories retold by Selina Hastings, "Paul's Letters," pp. 306-307*  
*Spark Story Bible, "Paul's Letters," pp. 540-541*

# Paul Writes Letters

Mary Nelson Keithahn

John D. Horman

Cheerfully (♩ = 104)

Piano *mf*

4 Voices *mf*

When Paul could not be

7 with his friends, he wrote to — them in - stead. His

10 let - ters helped them un - der - stand what Je - sus did and

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