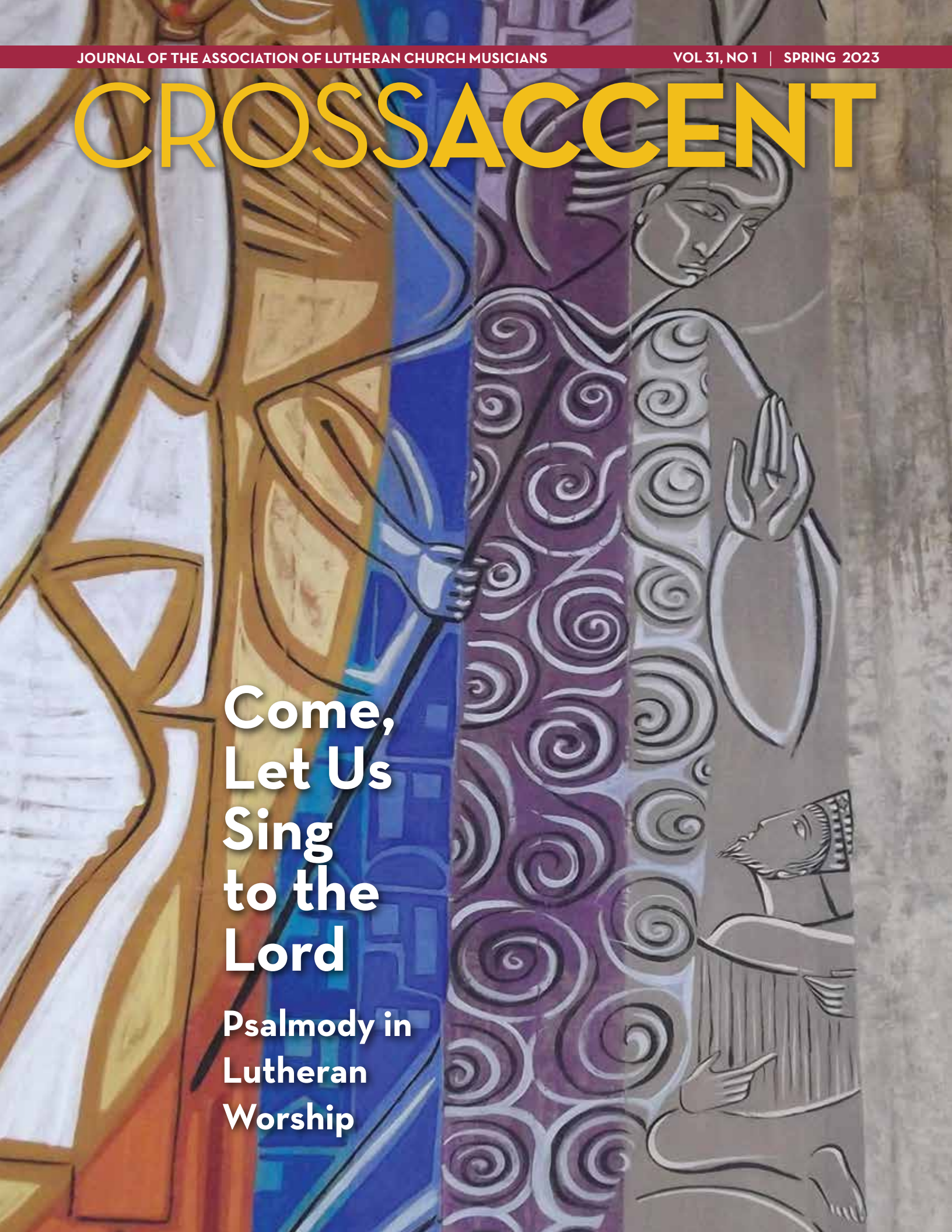


# CROSSACCENT



**Come,  
Let Us  
Sing  
to the  
Lord**

**Psalmody in  
Lutheran  
Worship**

# Singing the Psalms

## Using *Christian Worship: Psalter* (2021)

by Dale Witte

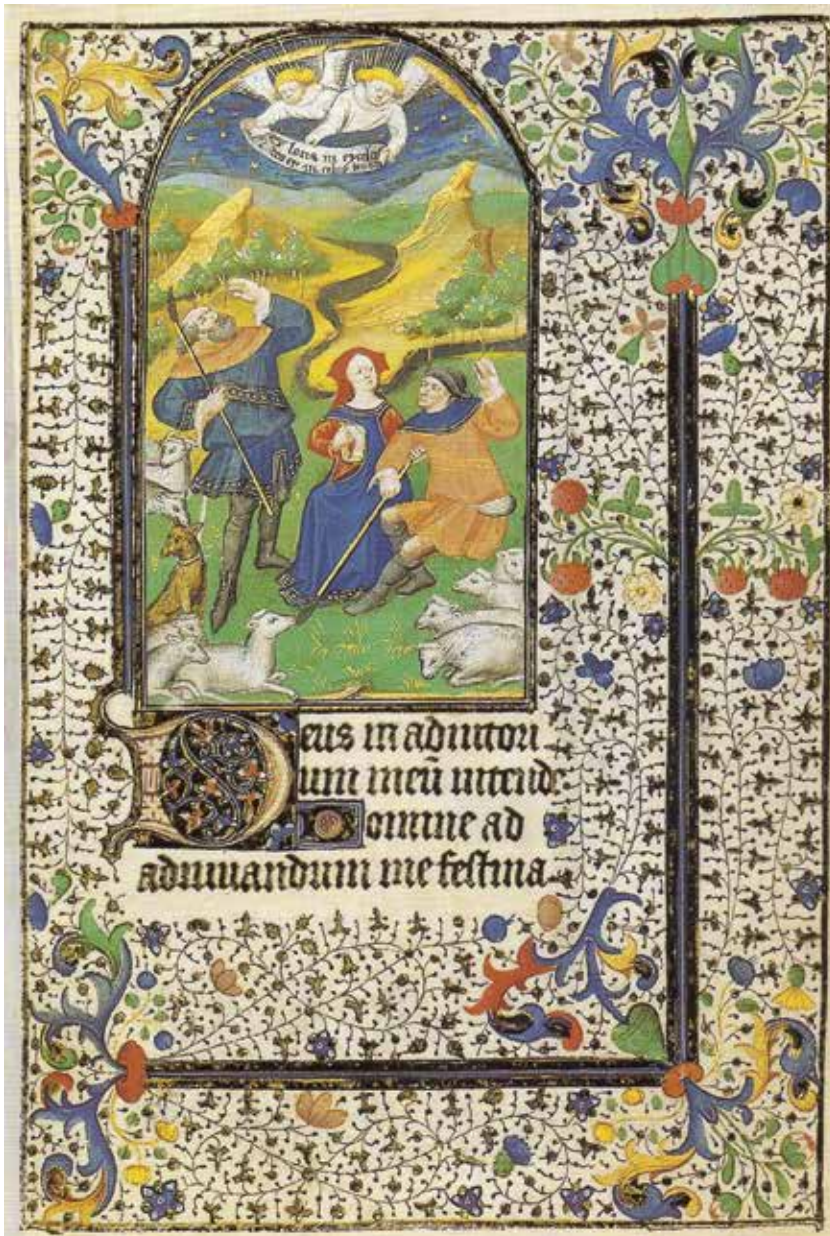
[Jesus] said to [His disciples], “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” (Luke 24:44; NIV)

### *The Psalms Testify about Jesus*

**W**hy sing the psalms? Consider how the passion, death, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ leads up to the virtual necessity of using psalmody in Lutheran worship.

After instituting the Lord’s Supper, Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. As he prayed to his heavenly Father, his sweat was like great drops of blood (Luke 22:44). His side was pierced with a spear while he hung, suffocating and dying, while being crucified on a cross (John 19:34). His body was wrapped in linen and sealed in a tomb, where it lay until He returned to life after descending into hell to declare his victory over death and the devil (1 Peter 3:18–20). Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene and the two Emmaus disciples.

Later that evening, he said the words that are recorded in Luke 24:44 to the eleven disciples who had locked themselves in an upper room because they were afraid that the Jews were going to come after them for “stealing” Jesus’ body and claiming He was alive. It was then and there Jesus did something amazing: he opened his disciples’ minds so they could understand what was written about him in the law of Moses, the prophets, *and the psalms*—that is, the entire Old Testament. “Everything must be fulfilled that was written about me,” he told them.



Psalm 69: “God, attend to my help, O Lord, help me quickly” from the Mainz Stundenbuch, created in Paris ca. 1450.

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***The psalms, along with Moses and the prophets, also testify about Jesus. The psalms revealed who Jesus was to his disciples just as they also reveal who Jesus really is to us.***

The disciples knew that Jesus was foretold by Moses and the prophets. This is what Philip told Nathaniel when he found Jesus, “We have found the one *Moses* wrote about in the Law, and about whom the *prophets* also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (John 1:45; emphasis added). It is also what Paul confessed before King Agrippa: “I am saying nothing beyond what the *prophets* and *Moses* said would happen—that the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:22b, 23; emphasis added).

But Jesus added one more qualifier to Moses and the prophets: *the psalms*. The psalms, along with Moses and the prophets, also testify about Jesus. The psalms revealed who Jesus was to his disciples just as they also reveal who Jesus really is to us. The psalms predicted the events of his life and validated him to his disciples and to all believers as King (Psalm 2:6), as God’s Son (Psalm 2:7), and as our Lord (Psalm 110).

Consider the following comparisons and occasions when Jesus quoted from the psalms and explained how the psalms were fulfilled in his presence.

- Psalm 2:7—the baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:17)
- Psalm 8:2—Jesus at the Temple (Matthew 21:16)
- Psalm 16:10—the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:31, 13:35)
- Psalm 22:1—Jesus’ fourth word from the cross (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34)
- Psalm 22:16—Jesus appears to Thomas (John 20:25)
- Psalm 22:18—the soldiers mock Jesus (Matthew 27:35; John 19:24)
- Psalm 34:20—the death of Jesus (John 19:36)
- Psalms 35:19; 69:4—the world hates the disciples (John 15:25)
- Psalm 41:9—Jesus predicts His betrayal (John 13:18)
- Psalm 69:21—the Crucifixion (Matthew 27:34; John 19:29)
- Psalm 69:9—Jesus clears the Temple (John 2:17)
- Psalm 78:2—the parables of the mustard seed and the yeast (Matthew 13:35)



*Baptism of Jesus, miniature from the Psalter of Eleanor of Aquitaine, ca. 1185*

- Psalm 78:24, 25—Jesus the Bread of Life (John 6:31)
- Psalm 82:6—the unbelief of the Jews (John 10:34)
- Psalm 91:11, 12—the temptation of Jesus (Matthew 4:6; Luke 4:11)
- Psalm 110:1—whose son is Christ? (Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36, 16:19; Luke 20:42)
- Psalms 113–118—the Lord’s Supper (Matthew 26:30)
- Psalm 118:22, 23—the parable of the tenants (Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10, 11; Luke 20:17)
- Psalm 118:25, 26—Jesus’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:9, 23:39; Mark 11:9; Luke 13:35, 19:38; John 12:13)

If Jesus himself tells us through his disciples on the day of his resurrection from the dead that the entire Old Testament—including the psalms—testify about him, why would we not use them in Lutheran worship if we also read from Moses and the prophets?

### Music + God’s Word = Power

The psalms taken by themselves are enough to teach us who Jesus is. If we read them, study them, and commit them to memory, we will have the whole of God’s Word summarized in one book. Martin Luther knew this when he wrote

the Psalter ought to be a precious and beloved book, if for no other reason than this: it promises Christ’s death and resurrection so clearly—and pictures His kingdom and the condition and nature of all Christendom—that it might well be called a little Bible. In it is comprehended most beautifully and briefly everything that is in the entire Bible.

In fact, I have a notion that the Holy Spirit wanted to take the trouble Himself to compile a short Bible and book of examples of all Christendom for all saints, so that anyone

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***God gave the psalms a special “hidden” power that helps them stick in our memory and dwell in our hearts long after we have read them. God intended the psalms to be sung.***

who could not read the whole Bible would here have anyway almost an entire summary of it, comprised in one little book.<sup>1</sup>

But God gave the psalms a special “hidden” power that helps them stick in our memory and dwell in our hearts long after we have read them. God intended the psalms to be sung:

Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord (Ephesians 5:18b–19).

Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts (Colossians 3:16).

Which is easier to do: recite an entire hymn from memory or sing an entire hymn from memory? This is a very important reason to sing the psalms. Most people, after getting past the embarrassment of their own singing voice, would agree that it is easier to sing an entire hymn from memory than it is to recite verse after verse. Little children would also agree. They can sing back to their teachers, their parents, and their friends any number of hymns and songs that they learned in Sunday school and in Lutheran elementary school. Just get them started, and off they go! If it is true for committing hymn texts to memory, then it is also true for committing the psalms to memory.

Another reason to sing the psalms is to preserve the pattern of “speak, sing, speak” in worship. The Psalm of the Day not only acts as a liturgical proper—changing from week to week according to the church year calendar—but it also

comes between two spoken sections of the Word: the Old Testament reading (a.k.a. the First Lesson) and the Epistle Lesson (a.k.a. the Second Lesson). When the Psalm of the Day is sung, it not only provides a musical reflection on the theme of the day but it becomes a musical device for allowing God's Word to sail into the worshipper's heart and make safe mooring.

Singing the Psalm of the Day also allows the congregation an opportunity to participate in worship. As any teacher knows, students will learn and retain more if you have them participate in their own education, not just sit back and try to learn everything by listening. ("What I hear, I forget. What I see, I remember. What I do, I understand."—attributed to Confucian philosopher Xunzi). As my father, David Witte—a WELS pastor of forty-plus years—used to say, "No one comes out of church whistling the sermon." Why sing the psalms? To firmly implant God's Word into the hearts and memories of our congregations through music.

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**Another reason to sing the psalms is to preserve the pattern of "speak, sing, speak" in worship. The Psalm of the Day ... comes between two spoken sections of the Word ... . When the Psalm of the Day is sung, ... it becomes a musical device for allowing God's Word to sail into the worshipper's heart and make safe mooring.**

## Musical Solutions for Singing the Psalms

Psalms were intended to be sung. They were the hymnal of the Old Testament era. Directions for their singing and the titles of tunes to which they were to be sung can be seen with many of the psalms—

- Psalm 4—With stringed instruments.
- Psalm 5—For pipes.
- Psalm 6—With stringed instruments. According to *sheminith*.
- Psalm 9—To the tune of "The Death of the Son."
- Psalm 22—To the tune of "The Doe of the Morning."
- Psalm 45—To the tune of "Lilies."
- Psalm 55—With stringed instruments. A *maskil* of David.

—but, sadly, we have no idea what they sounded like in Old Testament Temple worship.

### Cantillation

The earliest indications for chanting the psalms can be inferred by the accents, or cantillation, of the Masoretic text,<sup>2</sup> which dates between the 7th and 11th centuries CE. This system, however, is not an exact music notation and leaves much of the chanting up to the context of the word in the phrase and to the skill of the chanter in deciphering the meaning of the accents and how they imply a melody. Twentieth-century French musicologist Suzanne Haïk-Vantoura has interpreted cantillation marks as they apply to singing the psalms, attempting to recreate in modern musical notation and sound recordings what the cantillation marks of the Masoretic text of the Hebrew psalms could have implied for singing directions.<sup>3</sup>

### Gregorian Psalm Tones

The first Western mainstream method of singing the psalms in Christian worship was chanting according to the intricate formulae laid out in the eight psalm tones of the Gregorian system. This system served the Christian church for more than a thousand years (c. 500–1500 CE) and is still in use today in many churches. Even though the Gregorian psalm tone system is complex and is not easily usable by a novice congregation, its eight psalm tones provided the framework for a late twentieth-century resurgence of responsorial psalmody using single and double psalm tones. Chanting the psalms using a formulary tone system such as the Gregorian psalm tones relies on having a cantor or a choir sing the entire psalm, including the antiphon. The congregation didn't yet have a good vehicle for singing the psalms either in whole or in part.

### Luther's Psalm Hymns

There have been a number of solutions proposed over the centuries to accommodate congregational singing of the psalms, the earliest of which adopted a method of translating and rewriting the text of each Hebrew psalm into the native language of a given congregation using a poetic meter that could be easily sung to a hymn tune—a metrical paraphrase. In 1523, Martin Luther used this method to versify Psalm 46 (*“Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott”*), which we know as “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” (*CW21* 863, 864; *ELW* 503, 504, 505; *LSB* 656, 657), and Psalm 130 (*“Aus tiefer Not”*), which we know as “From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee/ You | From Depths of Woe, Lord God, I Cry | Out of the Depths I Cry to You” (*CW93* 305; *CW21* 650; *ELW* 600; *LSB* 607).

It was so important for the Lutheran Reformation to have German Protestant congregations participate in worship, not only singing German hymns of the liturgy (which replaced the choir singing the Ordinary of the Mass in Latin) but also singing German psalm hymns, such as Luther's *“Ein feste Burg”* and *“Aus tiefer Not.”* It was also

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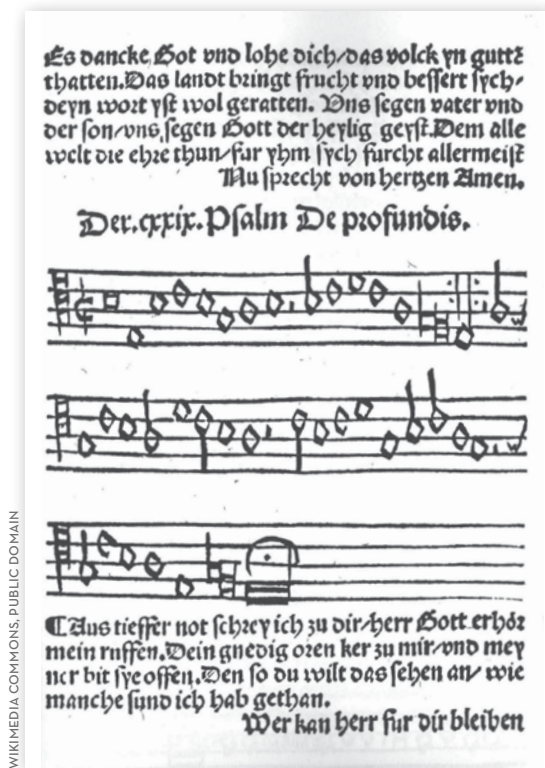
***It was so important for the Lutheran Reformation to have German Protestant congregations participate in worship, not only singing German hymns of the liturgy ... but also singing German psalm hymns ... . It was also important that they knew what they were singing in contrast to not participating in worship and just listening to the Catholic priest speaking and singing in Latin.***

important that they knew what they were singing in contrast to not participating in worship and just listening to the Catholic priest speaking and singing in Latin. This change enabled them to sing the Reformation across Europe.

Luther commissioned a number of close friends—George Spalatin, Johann Dolzig, and “someone else”—to also make “German Psalms for the people,” even though they apparently never fulfilled his request.<sup>4</sup> While some would label Luther's German verifications of Psalms 46 and 130 “psalm songs”—or German poetry based on the psalms—rather than verbatim German poetic translation equivalents of the original Hebrew poetry, their staying power into the twenty-first century is undeniable. The idea of metrical psalmody—psalms that sang like hymns—was born out of the Reformation.

### Metrical Psalters

While Luther was encouraging “German Psalms for the people” in Germany, John Calvin was advocating psalm singing in the Reformed congregations of Geneva and Strasbourg. His Genevan Psalter has become the de facto standard for psalm singing in Reformed churches throughout the world, and it sparked a resurgence of psalm singing using metrical paraphrases. (It is in the 1551



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edition of this psalter that the cherished setting of the tune OLD HUNDREDTH was first published.)

Metrical psalters came to North America with the European colonists. The so-called Bay Psalm Book was the first book printed in British North America in 1640 in Cambridge, MA. It contained rather rough examples (by modern standards) of English poetry,<sup>5</sup> but it met the desire of the early residents of the Massachusetts Bay colony for English translations of Hebrew psalm poetry that were better than the psalters they had brought with them. Metrical psalters were more in use in the early United States than was Gregorian chant, and singing the psalms was a cherished part of worship for early American Christians.

Metrical psalters made the leap into being classified as modern hymnody when, in 1719, Isaac Watts paraphrased nearly the entire psalter into metrical psalmody in his *Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament*. Watts' paraphrases of the psalms captured the essence of each psalm while also interpreting each psalm in light of the gospel message of the New Testament. Many of Watts' metrical psalms are still in common use today, such as "Joy to the World"<sup>6</sup> (Psalm 98), "Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun"<sup>7</sup> (Psalm 72), "O God, Our Help in Ages Past"<sup>8</sup> (Psalm 90), and "Oh, Bless the Lord, My Soul"<sup>9</sup> (Psalm 103).

"Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir" ("Out of deep distress I call to You"), BWV 38, a chorale cantata by J. S. Bach, is based on Martin Luther's hymn, a paraphrase of Psalm 130.

## WELS and the Psalms

### Early History

Early twentieth-century WELS hymnals do not have psalm sections nor are there places in the liturgy prescribed for either the reading or singing of large portions of psalmody. There were versicles in the Vespers service that quoted short lines of psalmody ("M: Oh Lord, open Thou my lips. C: And my mouth shall show forth Thy praise.") and some metrical psalmody was included in the hymn section (e.g., "Joy to the World," "Out of the Depths"), but these were not referred to as "singing the psalms."

### From *The Lutheran Hymnal* (1941) to *Christian Worship: Psalter* (2021)

It was not until the 1941 publication of *The Lutheran Hymnal* (TLH) that psalms were printed en masse in a Lutheran hymnal used in WELS congregations. Psalms in TLH were not pointed for singing, nor was music made readily available. However, rubrics indicated that the psalms included in the introits and graduals "may be chanted by the choir" (TLH, 6). Because the psalms were included in TLH—perhaps the most widely used Lutheran hymnal of the twentieth century—some WELS congregations developed a habit of reading the psalms in corporate worship.

In 1986, as work progressed on the development of a new and revised hymnal for the WELS, a *Sampler* was published to field-test and introduce new hymns and liturgies. Included in the *Sampler* were twelve psalms pointed for singing; these borrowed seven psalm tones from the 1982 hymnal *Lutheran Worship*.

Page 2 of the *Sampler* laid out a new rationale about the psalms:

Provision is made in the service for a larger use of the Psalms. Historically the choir chanted verses from the Psalms as the clergy entered the sanctuary (Introit). The opening hymn sung by the congregation replaces this

Introit Psalm. In the service the “Psalm for the Day” introduces the scripture readings. It reflects the theme for the day or season. Twelve Psalms for trial use are printed in the sampler. Directions for singing or speaking the Psalms are included in the notes for worship leaders.<sup>10</sup>

According to some in the WELS, this method of singing the psalms did not go over well in a church body without a history of singing the psalms.<sup>11</sup> But what the *Sampler* psalms did accomplish was to take an important step toward congregational psalm singing in the WELS: providing a musical means to sing the psalms (chanted single psalm tones) and putting that music into the hands of the congregation.

At the same time the *Sampler* was published, another major Christian hymnal was published, *Worship* (3rd ed., GIA). The volume gave the *CW93* hymnal committee the idea to include the psalm settings in *CW93*.<sup>12</sup> In this third edition of *Worship*, every psalm in the psalmody section had an antiphon, a single or double psalm tone, and a Gelineau tone, although there was no indication how the psalmody was to be performed. The implications were that the congregation or worship leader was at liberty to choose which psalm tone to use and that the antiphon, according to traditional usage, began and ended the psalm. A similar structure in *CW93* made all the difference for the success of this hymnal’s psalm settings.

When *CW93* was published, it was anticipated that WELS congregations would only sing the refrains of the psalms and that a choir or cantor would sing the verses, because the refrains were more melodic than the psalm tones. If the psalm was going to be sung in worship successfully, it would be easier for a congregation to learn how to sing a refrain that sounds like a normal melody than it would to learn how to read psalm pointing and learn how to chant. This proposed method of responsorial recitation described in the introduction to the psalmody section of *CW93* (63) and in the *CW93 Manual* (150) also allowed the

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congregation to join in on the Gloria Patri.

However, the standard of psalm singing in the WELS since 1993 has not followed these plans. Because of the lack of liturgical choirs and cantors in the WELS, congregations have learned to sing the entire psalm in *CW93*—refrains, verses, and Gloria Patri (direct recitation)—and to sing it fairly well. Most WELS congregations don’t stumble over single psalm tones anymore, and most expect to sing the entire Psalm of the Day. This was not the intended plan of the framers of *CW93* for psalm singing, but it has been a blessing to many WELS congregations and worshippers.

As congregations became familiar with the fifty-nine psalm settings of *CW93*, WELS’ publisher, Northwestern, and the WELS Commission on Worship expanded available WELS psalmody between 2002 and 2008 in several new publications. Ten “night time” psalm settings were published to provide psalmody for the two Compline services. These ten psalm settings were very similar to *CW93* psalmody in structure (one page, selected verses, refrain, single tone), while also introducing double psalm tones to WELS congregations.

The publication of a supplement to *CW93* in 2008 marked the halfway point between *CW93* and its planned replacement hymnal; it included twenty-four new psalm settings. These new settings expanded the pericopic psalm appointments of *CW93*, provided festival settings of psalms that were appointed for festival days, and provided a variety of new settings to augment the psalms of *CW93*. Congregational psalm singing had taken a firm hold in many WELS congregations, and many were asking for more variety of musical settings.

Enter *Christian Worship: Psalter (CWP)*, compiled as part of the most recent WELS hymnal project (*CW21*) to serve congregations with a variety of multiple musical settings for each psalm of the lectionary. For congregations that are ready to



experience psalm singing with other responsorial chant, the WELS psalm committee has included metrical psalms (a.k.a. “psalm hymns”) and responsorial lyrical psalms (a.k.a. “psalm songs”) with flowing melodies for the verses. The goal was to have multiple musical settings for each lectionary psalm so that congregations would have much more variety in psalm singing than just chanting the verses.

*CWP* goes far beyond that simple goal of providing variety by also providing multiple musical settings of all 150 psalms. Why provide musical settings of psalms not normally included in the lectionary? *CWP* can thus be used both for corporate worship *and* personal private devotion. Every psalm is printed in full, followed by a newly composed prayer that encapsulates the themes of that psalm. Also included is an explanation of how the church has used that psalm and a quote from Luther on that psalm.

## Psalm Authors

Seven authors of the psalms are:

- David (75) the second king of Israel is the chief author of the psalms.
- Asaph (12) a priest who served as the worship leader of ancient Israel
- The Sons of Korah (10) a guild of singers and composers of music
- Solomon (2) David’s son, the third king of Israel, accounted for two psalms.
- Moses (1) the great leader of Israel and the Exodus
- Heman (1) a wise man, musician, an Ezrahite, a son of Korah, and founder of the Korahite choir
- Ethan (1) a wise man and Ezrahite, probably a Levitical singer
- Anonymous (48) authors account for the remaining forty-eight psalms

## Psalm-Singing Variety for Corporate Worship

One might read the list below, select only one way to perform a psalm, and think that that was enough for their congregation. But consider an analogy: think about what you eat. If you eat the same meal for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, you may enjoy it and get enough nutrition to stay healthy, but you’d never begin to explore all the wonderful foods God gave us. So it is with singing the psalms: if you choose only one method of singing, you will never know the enjoyment, the reflection, the pacing, and the edification of a variety of methods of performance.

Traditionally, there have been four methods of presenting the psalms in worship. Each method may be spoken or sung.

1. **Direct recitation**—a whole psalm or a portion chanted or read in unison by any sized group
2. **Antiphonal recitation**—a verse-by-verse alternation between two “equal” groups (e.g., choir and congregation, one side of the congregation and the other, and so on)
3. **Responsorial recitation**—a soloist or choir singing the verses while the congregation responds with the refrain
4. **Responsive reading**—a verse-by-verse spoken alternation between a pastor and the congregation<sup>13</sup>

Practically, there are many options outside these four traditional methods. Some of these methods might work best in a congregation with a choir. Others might work best in congregations with more limited musical resources. Whichever method you use, start with what’s comfortable for your congregation; only after they have gained confidence in that method should you introduce a new method. When they are comfortable with a second method, then alternate those methods before introducing a third. The following methods

of psalm singing may help stretch your congregation beyond these four traditional methods.

1. **The congregation sings the complete psalm (refrain, verses, and Gloria Patri).** This is the pattern that has become the unintended standard method of singing psalms in many WELS congregations since *CW93* was introduced, but it may not be the best starting point for a congregation that has never sung or chanted a psalm in corporate worship.
2. **The congregation sings the refrain while a cantor or soloist sings the verses.** If your congregation doesn't have a choir or hasn't had the tradition of singing the psalms, then you may want to start here. The refrain is usually the most melodic portion of a responsorial psalm setting and will be the most memorable for the congregation. When introducing a new psalm setting to your congregation, introduce the refrain first on keyboard (piano or organ, whichever is more appropriate for the psalm or for your given situation), then have the cantor or soloist sing the refrain so the congregation can hear it. Finally, have the congregation sing the refrain. A judiciously worded bulletin rubric or an announcement by the pastor will help the congregation know when it is their turn to sing the refrain. If your congregation doesn't have a music minister or cantor to sing or chant the verses, you may have a pastor who is a gifted singer who could be a good vocal model for the congregation of how to chant (see no. 3 below). Other congregations may have a soloist or two who normally sing for weddings who could be asked to sing the psalm verses. If there are a couple of soloists, using them in a rotation of Sundays will be easier on them and on the congregation.
3. **The congregation sings the refrain; the choir sings the verses.** This is an expansion of no. 2. The important thing to remember when a cantor, soloist, or choir models for the congregation how to sing or chant the verses of the

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*The refrain is usually the most melodic portion of a responsorial psalm setting and will be the most memorable for the congregation.*

psalm is that the inherent rhythm of the words of the psalm verses sets both the tempo and inflections for the chanting of the verses. Too often with a larger group of singers, such as a choir or congregation, the chanted psalm verse lyrics plod along metronomically. The musical notation of a single or double psalm tone is not meant to imply the metrical rhythms usually encountered with music notation. A feathered whole note is used for the reciting tone, the pitch on which the majority of the verse is chanted. A chanted psalm tone is akin to sung speech. No one speaks mechanically: there is ebb and flow and inflection to all spoken language. In the same way, good psalm chanting (i.e., the verses) should come off like someone just happens to be putting pitch to their speaking. The notes at the end of each half of the psalm tone (i.e., the half cadence and the final cadence: two eighth notes and a quarter or half note, or two quarter notes and a half note) only indicate the pitches on which to end each phrase of chanting, not the exact rhythm or speed of the singing. Do not dramatically speed up or slow down at the cadences, but let the words themselves determine the rhythm and inflection.

4. **The congregation sings the refrain, the choir sings the first half of the verse, and the congregation responds with the second half of the verse.** This is a variation of no. 3. The chanting of the psalm verse is divided into two halves, assigning one group to sing the first half of the verse and another group to sing the second half of the verse. But there are a couple of hidden problems with this method.

The asterisk of the psalm tone (as it appears in some psalters and hymnals) is only meant to mark the middle of the psalm verse

as an indication of when to move in the lyrics to the second half of the psalm tone. It is not meant to indicate a change in performing group. Unfortunately, many congregations use the asterisk (or half cadence) as a division between two groups of singers (i.e., as the point at which the first group stops singing and the second group starts).

This is only an issue from a teaching point of view, because when one group of singers only sings the first half of the psalm tone, they never act as a model for the second group to imitate. Their material is different from the second group's material, so the second group needs either to be able to read music or to be fast learners. A better method of alternation between groups may be no. 6 below.

5. **The congregation sings the refrain and splits the psalm tone in half by right-side and left-side pews of the church.** This is a variation on no. 4. While not the best method of alternation (see no. 6 for a better method), it is easily understood, and both halves of the congregation will always have the same amount of singing. This method only allows the congregation to get really good at singing half the tone at a time. Creative church musicians can come up with even more variations on this method depending on the architecture of their church (floor vs. balcony, and so on) or the makeup of the congregation (men vs. women, and the like). If this method is used on successive weeks of worship, it would be good to vary which group starts so that, once again, there is variety in singing and everyone learns how to sing both halves of a psalm tone.
6. **The congregation sings the refrain, the choir sings the odd verses, and the congregation sings the even verses.** The main advantage of this method is alternation by whole, not half, verses. If the choir begins with the first verse, then the congregation has a singing model to imitate how to sing the entire psalm tone in the second verse. This is what makes this method

of alternation more desirable than alternation by half verse. The challenge in using this method is when the psalm verses are not numbered: you can either persevere and strictly follow the odd/even alternation, or the pastor can announce before the singing of the psalm that the choir will always sing the first verse after each refrain. When alternating, it is common practice that all groups join together to sing the Gloria Patri.

7. **The choir sings the refrain and a cantor or soloist sings the verses.** This is a variation on no. 2 that may be used to introduce a new psalm to the congregation. This method allows the choir to be the choir and sing a more difficult version of the refrain than the congregation could ever sing (SATB or newly composed for the day in gospel motet fashion). For those congregations that do not have a history of singing the psalms, this method may also be beneficial to use until they get used to how psalm singing sounds. Once they have heard the choir and cantor sing the psalms in this method for a while, the congregation may actually beg to be included in singing the psalm because they have heard it done so much they know exactly how to do it.

If your congregation has already mastered the psalm settings of *CW93* and its supplemental publications but still craves even more psalm singing variety, then they are ready for *CWP*.

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*If the choir begins with the first verse, then the congregation has a singing model to imitate how to sing the entire psalm tone in the second verse.*

## Sixteen Ways to Use CWP in PreK–8 Christian Classrooms

Since the psalms testify about Jesus and also reflect the entire life of the Christian, PreK–8 Christian classrooms can greatly benefit from using *CWP*. Consider the following ideas for incorporating this psalter into the classroom. (Live links to these URLs can be found in the online version of the article on the ALCM website.)

1. **Listen to psalm playlists or albums during quiet times to get the sound of psalm singing in your student’s ears and hearts.** Here are some suggestions.
  - “CW Psalter”—a YouTube playlist (a work in progress) compiled by Paul Prange (chair of the psalmody committee for *CW21* and *CWP*) that includes official demonstration psalm videos, original source recordings, and metrical psalmody hymn tune examples (<https://tinyurl.com/ydxhu8u6>)
  - “CW Psalter—Recording Links”—also a work in progress, compiled by Witte, that provides direct links from Prange’s *CWP* playlist above to individual *CWP* settings, with recording notes from Witte (<https://tinyurl.com/58n2decz>)
  - “Psalms”—a YouTube playlist compiled by Witte that gathers many psalm settings that weren’t chosen for *CWP* (<https://tinyurl.com/wx88v7tu>)
  - *North Coast Sessions*—an album by Keith and Kristyn Getty mostly of psalms (<https://tinyurl.com/5fz78rux>)
  - Wendell Kimbrough—Two of this artist’s settings appear in *CWP* (62D, 139D); this Spotify list includes Psalm 62 (<https://tinyurl.com/3p3xcwdf>).
  - “LSB Psalm Tones”—Very few, if any, of these appear in *CWP*, but they are listed here as an example of how to chant (<https://tinyurl.com/4sa3r798>).
  - “Wasilla Bible Church: The Psalms Project”—videos of individual psalms (some to original settings) sung as part of an Alaskan church’s project to sing through the entire psalter in order on consecutive Sundays; two of these settings appear in *CWP* (7B, 86A). Sheet music for some of the settings is linked on the site (<https://tinyurl.com/yc53ppkf>).
2. **In early childhood (PreK–2), sing psalm refrains that match a given unit or theme of study.** Here are some suggestions.
  - All music is taught by rote (either a cappella or accompanied by ukulele, guitar, autoharp, piano, and the like).
  - Repetition is the key to retention. Refrains are quite desirable for the littles, especially if time is a factor. Teachers can sing the verse for the littles if the lyrics are too complex. Given enough time, littles are capable of learning a lot!
  - Incorporate movement with singing: dance, clap, play instruments, wave scarves.
  - Coordinate music with units and themes during Jesus time, music time, daily activities.
  - Melodies should span no more than an octave. Middle C (C4) is the lowest note littles can sing. Beware of melodies that go above C5 (teach/model how to use head voice) and below C4. Adjust keys as necessary to fit the littles’ voices.
3. **Sing a psalm with a devotion** (morning or afternoon) instead of a hymn. Not sure which psalm to pick? Use the Christian Worship: Service Builder software to search for a Scripture passage or a descriptive word that matches the content or lesson of your devotion (e.g.,

“truth”). Appropriate psalms and hymns will be shown.

Talk to your pastor about getting an account on your church’s Service Builder so you can both search the hymnal and psalter (lectionaries, texts, lyrics, and so on) and obtain projections of the psalm and music for your classroom.

**4. Make your own psalm devotion, using the first (complete) psalm of each number in CWP, the psalm prayer, and the paragraph with the Luther quote and information on church usage.** Start with the paragraph detailing how the church uses that psalm as an introduction. Then read or sing the psalm and conclude with the psalm prayer. There you go—150 devotions planned out of 180 school days!

**5. Find a psalm devotion book and augment it by singing related psalms from CWP** (make sure to read the book through first for doctrinal and Biblical accuracy). Here are some suggestions.

- *The Songs of Jesus: A Year of Daily Devotions in the Psalms* by Timothy and Kathy Keller (New York: Viking, 2015)
- *The One Year Book of Psalms: 365 Inspirational Readings from One of the Best-Loved Books of the Bible* by William and Randy Petersen (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1999)
- *Reading the Psalms with Luther* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2007)
- *Blessed Is the Man: Psalms of Praise: A Man’s Journey through the Psalms* by Joel D. Biermann and others (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2009)

**6. Do you have a unit on the psalms for Bible history?** Here are two helpful books.

- *Psalms: Conversations with God* compiled by Debb Andrus (St. Louis: Concordia, 1994), part of the publisher’s God’s Word

for Today series, is a downloadable Bible class or worksheet format; with twelve lessons. Augment with the singing of a psalm setting from *CWP* for each lesson (again: “What I hear, I forget. What I see, I remember. What I do, I understand.”—Xunzi)

- *Discovering Hope in the Psalms* by Pam Farrel and Jean E. Jones (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2017). This Bible study of ten psalms of hope offers compelling teachings, motivating devotions, and plenty of creative options for interacting with the psalms, including beautiful artwork to color. Augment with the singing of a psalm setting from *CWP* for each lesson.

**7. Use the psalms as you teach music history and appreciation, church history, poetry, geography, writing biographical summaries, and so on.**

- What kind of musical psalm setting is it? Find it in the “Genres and Musical Styles” index in *CWP* (832–33). How does knowing a psalm setting’s musical style inform its performance?
- Who was the composer? What can you find out about them online? What else have they composed? How does knowing about the psalm setting’s composer inform its performance?
- If the text is a metrical paraphrase, who is it by? Are there other metrical paraphrases by the same poet in *CWP*? (Consult the “Sources Index” in *CWP* [829–831].) In other places? (Consult the internet.) How does knowing about the psalm setting’s poet or lyricist inform its performance?
- How accurate is the metrical paraphrase? Compare it with the biblical psalm text. What verses are represented? (Highlight them). Which are skipped? Why? Rate the paraphrase on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 is very weak; 5 is very accurate).

- What musical era, geographical region, or denominational background does the musical setting come from? How does knowing this inform its performance?
8. **Preview or review the appointed Psalm of the Week for the church year that will be or has been sung in church.** Teach your students to sing a particular musical setting of the psalm. (Same one all week? Different one each day?)
  9. **Explore psalms and their musical settings that aren't sung in church.** See Witte's roster of "Non-Pericopic Psalm Appointments and Usage (a.k.a. Topical Psalm Index)" (<https://tinyurl.com/yr5yc6f3>) and the *CWP* "Usages" index (834–38).
 

If the psalms truly are "the songs of [God's] people, [God's] Church, with hearts laid open, praising and lamenting" (Martin Luther, quoted in the introduction to *CWP*, v), then there is a psalm that expresses every mood and situation of a Christian's life.

Sing psalms during the difficult times in life (middle and upper grades, especially).

    - Psalm 69C—when people hate you without reason
    - Psalm 71B—when you feel like everyone is against you
    - Psalm 43B—when you feel alone
    - See also the "Usages" index in *CWP* (834–38) and *Christian Worship: Service Builder*, searching terms such as these: abandonment, anxiety, betrayal, boasting, brokenhearted, comfort, complaint, conflict, cruelty, death, despair, distress, doubt, enemies, envy, failure, grief, guilt, hopelessness, hostility, hypocrisy, loneliness, mocking, opposition, oppression, pain, persecution, pressure, sin, slander, stress, suffering, terror, trouble, turmoil, vengeance, violence, weariness, worry.
  10. **Teach your students how to pray the psalms.** "If you were to pray through a psalm, like Psalm 23, you read the first line of verse 1, 'The Lord is my shepherd,' and pray anything that comes to mind until you run out of things to say prompted from that one line" (Jonny Fulks, "Praying the Psalms with My Students," <https://tinyurl.com/5cbyfjkk>).
 

Consult "Psalms for Prayer—A Daily Schedule" in *CW21* (254), a seasonal psalm cycle that can be used with the assigned readings in the Daily Lectionary.
  11. **Music class: incorporate handbells or hand-chimes to play psalm tones. Ring the chord, then sing.** See *The Creative Use of Handbells in Worship* by Hal H. Hopson (Carol Stream, IL: Hope, 1997) for more ideas.
  12. **Have your students introduce a new musical setting to your congregation.** The students sing the hard parts (verses). The congregation sings the easy parts (refrain). Work together with your pastor, choir director, and worship coordinators.
  13. **Pick a Psalm of the Month or Psalm of the Season of the Church Year** for weekly school chapel.
  14. **Student Personal Bible Reading:** organize a classroom bulletin board challenge to read all 150 psalms by the end of the school year.
  15. **Choose a psalm verse as a yearly school theme.** Use one or more musical settings from *CWP* as a theme song throughout the school year. Use the psalm for school corporate chapel texts each week. (Pick a psalm with more than 36 verses?)

16. **Connect the psalms with Bible stories, catechism units, Sunday school lessons, New Testament quotes, and the like and sing them when studying.** Here are some suggestions.

#### David's Life

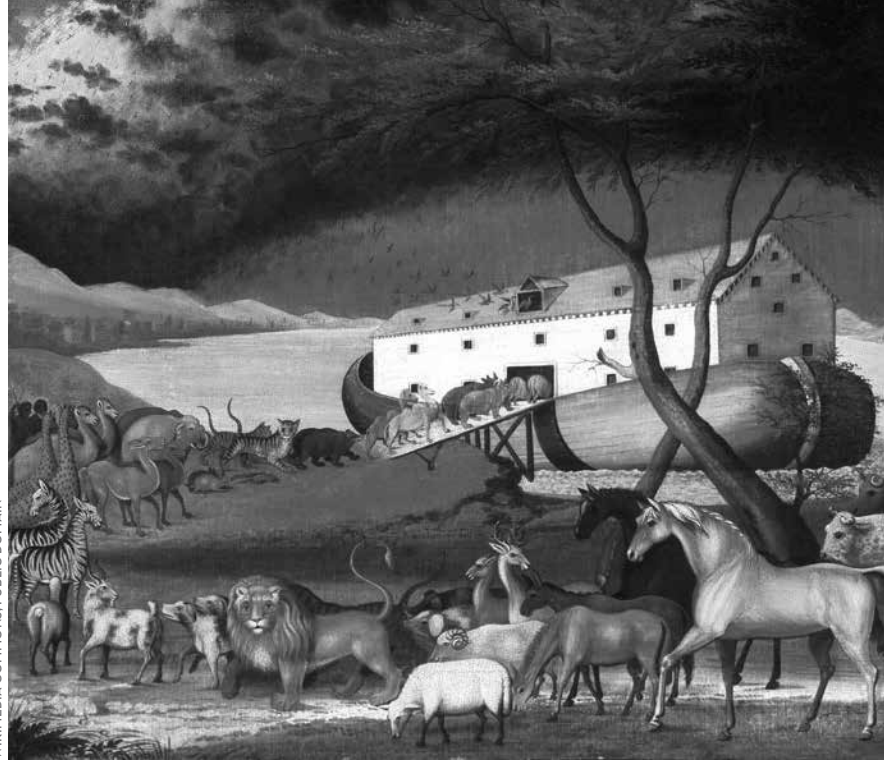
- “Probable Occasion When Each Psalm Was Composed”—on the Blue Letter Bible site (<https://tinyurl.com/597emshh>)
- “Bible Timeline: Psalms”—on the Bible Hub website; includes a listing of David’s psalms and the corresponding Biblical events with dates (<https://tinyurl.com/2bdzyab5>).
- “Psalms Based on Incidents in David’s Life”—on the English Standard Version of the Bible site (<https://tinyurl.com/39t7j6bu>)

#### New Testament Psalm Quotes

- “The Bible: Psalms in the New Testament” by Jim Herst and Tim Finlay—from the site hosted by Grace Communion International (<https://tinyurl.com/y23ny274>)

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***If the psalms truly are “the songs of [God’s] people, [God’s] Church, with hearts laid open, praising and lamenting, ... then there is a psalm that expresses every mood and situation of a Christian’s life.***



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#### The Flood and Psalm 29

**The Ten Commandments** (from *CWP* “Usages” index, 838)

- 1st Commandment (You shall have no other gods)—21, 33, 91, 111, 115, 134 (see also *CWP* Psalm 16C, v. 1: “never shall I look to other gods”)
- 2nd Commandment (You shall not misuse the name)—8, 10, 29, 107, 138
- 3rd Commandment (Remember the Sabbath)—1, 15, 40, 50, 68, 92
- 4th Commandment (Honor your father and mother)—127, 128
- 5th Commandment (You shall not murder)—37, 94
- 6th Commandment (You shall not commit adultery)—50, 51
- 7th Commandment (You shall not steal)—15, 50, 62
- 8th Commandment (You shall not give false witness)—4, 5, 7, 12, 15, 35, 41, 50, 55, 58, 59, 62, 63, 101, 109, 119, 120, 144
- 9th and 10th Commandments (You shall not covet)—19, 73, 139

*“Noah’s Ark” by Edward Hicks, 1846*

**The Lord’s Prayer** (from *CWP* “Usages” index, 836)

- 1st Petition (Hallowed be your name)—10, 12, 115, 145
- 2nd Petition (Your kingdom come)—1, 2, 21, 119, 143
- 3rd Petition (Your will be done)—1, 87, 103
- 4th Petition (Give us today our daily bread)—34, 62, 104, 145, 146
- 5th Petition (Forgive us)—51, 143
- 6th Petition (Lead us not into temptation)—17, 91, 141
- 7th Petition (Deliver us from evil)—3, 140

“Praying Hands” by Albrecht Dürer, 1508



## Musical Considerations for Introducing the Psalms

### For the Organist

To introduce the psalm tone or not, that is the question. Some organists customarily play the psalm tone followed by the refrain before beefing up the registration as a cue to the congregation to sing along with the refrain. Playing both the psalm tone and refrain as the introduction to the psalm may only be necessary as long as the psalm tone is unfamiliar to the congregation. Musically, it is more expedient to play the refrain once on a softer registration or manual if the congregation becomes familiar with the setting. If the choir will be singing the verses, it is not necessary to introduce the psalm tone, as long as the choir has rehearsed adequately.

A word about organ registration for psalm singing: as a general rule, the refrain can handle a beefier registration (more Principals) than the psalm tone (fewer or thinner Principals or Flutes). Back in the late 1980s and early '90s, the school of thought on organ registration for psalm singing was to use 8' and 4' Principals for the refrain, but only an 8' Flute for the psalm tone. Since then, with the general acceptance of the styles of psalm settings found in *CW93*, it is very common to hear an almost identical registration used for the accompaniment of a psalm as for the accompaniment of a hymn.

Organists should keep these thoughts in mind as they register for psalm singing.

1. Not every psalm conveys the same mood, so registrations should be varied to fit the mood of the psalm. One would not expect Psalm 130 (“Out of the depths”) to get the same registration as Psalm 100 (“Make a joyful noise to the Lord”).
2. The registration of the verse should be lighter



than the registration of the refrain for two reasons:

- a lighter registration helps musically set the verse apart from the refrain; and
  - a lighter registration helps the congregation hear themselves while singing the verses. If organists play too loudly while just holding the reciting tone chord, the congregation will have a hard time singing in sync with itself because they will not be able to hear the other side of the room sing. Listen carefully while the congregation sings the verse of the psalm. If you cannot hear the congregation, lighten the registration.
3. Congregations need to hear Flue pipes higher than just an 8' in order to help them delineate the melody line of a psalm tone. At the very least, a 4' stop should be added (Principal or Flute) for the psalm tone. A light 2' may also be appropriate given the mood of the psalm (festive) or the size of the congregation (large) or the space into which the organ plays. Some registration combinations for psalm tone accompaniment are:
- 8' and 4' Flutes
  - 8' Flute, 4' Principal
  - 8' Geigen Principal, 4' Flute
  - 8' and 4' Principals
  - 8', 4', and 2' Flutes
  - and so on

### For the Pianist

Fewer and fewer congregations have a musician capable of playing the organ, but they do have piano players. When accompanying a chanted psalm from the piano, consider the following.

1. A piano cannot sustain a reciting tone like an organ inherently can. The pianist may have to restrike the chord of the reciting tone while the

choir or cantor or congregation is chanting the verse. Consider restriking at a natural spot in the verse lyrics where one would take a breath or on a strong syllable.

2. A piano may be more difficult for a congregation to hear while singing than an organ. A judicious church pianist can help the congregation hear the accompaniment better without miking the piano by thinking like an organist.
  - To imitate a 16' pedal stop of an organ, consider doubling the bass line accompaniment in octaves in the left hand where possible while simultaneously revoicing the right hand to accommodate the necessary harmonies of the remaining SAT voices.
  - To imitate the 4' and 2' organ stops, judiciously double the melody in octaves in the right hand while arpeggiating the accompaniment harmonic structure.

### For the Worship Committee

How do you introduce a new musical element into worship? It's always good to let the congregation listen first and participate second instead of making them jump right in with both feet, but you've got to know your congregation. Some congregations are adept at picking up new hymns, liturgical canticles, and psalms and relish getting something new. They only need to hear it introduced once by the organist to sing it well. Other congregations are a little more apprehensive at learning something new. They'd probably benefit from hearing a choir or cantor sing the new psalm setting for a couple of Sundays before they join in. That's okay too!

Here are two ideas on introducing new psalm settings.

1. Sing a Psalm of the Season. This is the "less is more" approach for congregations that are fairly good at picking up new things but still need practice and reinforcement to feel comfortable. Pick one psalm that fits the mood and

message of a particular season of the church year (e.g., Psalm 24 for Advent; Psalm 96 or 98 for Christmas; Psalm 72 for Epiphany; Psalm 3 or Psalm 142 for Lent; Psalm 22 for Holy Week; Psalm 30 or 118 for Easter; Psalm 51b for Pentecost 1–5, Psalm 115 for Pentecost 6–10, Psalm 122 for Pentecost 10–15, and so on; Psalm 110 for End Times).

2. The choir or cantor sings everything (at first). This is for the congregation that is not used to changing anything in the liturgy and needs a lot of time to get comfortable with the idea of singing the psalms at all. It may take many weeks or months before the congregation is willing to try singing even just a portion of the psalms. Once they have heard the psalms sung and understand the structure and pace of psalmody, you can try the following steps.
  - Start by giving them just the refrain to sing while the choir or cantor sings the verses.
  - Then add the Gloria Patri, because it is always the same words and because they get a chance to hear the rise and fall of the psalm tone for an entire psalm before dipping their toes into the water of singing along on the Gloria Patri.
  - Then, after several weeks, go to alternation by full verses, giving the choir the first verse (odd) and the congregation the second (even). This gives the congregation a chance to hear the full psalm tone before they have to sing it. This method also allows them a “breather” while the choir sings the odd-numbered verses and gives them a chance to collect themselves. It also gives them time to reflect on God’s Word that they sang and that the choir is singing.
  - Finally, include the congregation on all the verses. This process may frustrate the musical members of the congregation, but it will help teach the slower learners and bring them along at their comfort level.



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## Notes

1. Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, American ed., vol. 35, *Word and Sacrament I*, ed. E. Theodore Bachmann (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1960), 254.
2. John F. Brug, *A Commentary on Psalms 1–72* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern, 2005), 70. For more on cantillation, see Cyrus Adler and Francis L. Cohen, “Cantillation,” in *Jewish Encyclopedia*, <https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/3986-cantillation>.
3. Suzanne Haïk-Vantoura, *The Music of the Bible Revealed: The Deciphering of a Millenary Notation*, trans. Denis Weber (Berkeley, CA: BIBAL Press, 1991).
4. Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, American ed., vol. 53, *Liturgy and Hymns*, ed. Ulrich A. Leupold (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1965), 221.
5. An example (Psalm 23) can be seen by scrolling down at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bay\\_Psalm\\_Book](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bay_Psalm_Book).
6. *CW93* 62; *CW21* 353; *ELW* 267; *LSB* 382.
7. *CW93* 84; *CW21* 380; *ELW* 434; *LSB* 832.
8. *CW93* 441; *CW21* 820; *ELW* 632; *LSB* 733.
9. *CW93* 238; *CW21* 623; *LSB* 814.
10. *Sampler: New Hymns and Liturgy* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern, 1986), 2.
11. William H. Braun and Victor H. Prange, eds., *Not Unto Us* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern, 2001), 219.
12. Braun and Prange, 219.
13. David Held, “The Psalms and Their Use,” in *Lutheran Worship: History and Practice*, ed. Fred L. Precht (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1993), 475–76.