

Discoveries #1: A New Resource for Singing the Psalms

Psalms for All Seasons: A Complete Psalter for Worship

[2012 Grand Rapids, MI. Co-published by the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Faith Alive Christian Resources, and Brazos Press—a division of Baker Publishing Group. 1132 pages, hard cover. \$33.00]

Psalms, although often spoken, are meant to be sung. I have an extensive file of psalm settings— file folders and notebooks with settings I have discovered over the years, from brief responsorial arrangements to full-bodied choral settings. I also check Scripture indices in various hymnals, supplements, and song collections. Publishers who aim to serve liturgical markets have provided significant collections. I thought this book would be just another such resource, but it has become my “go to” book.

The book jacket says this:

“This comprehensive, single-volume anthology is the largest collection of the Psalms for use in Christian worship ever published ... contains all 150 psalms, most in multiple formats.”

And the introduction claims that the selections are designed to:

- Encourage thoughtful and faithful engagement with the text of each psalm;
- Feature musical styles that are singable and accessible;
- Be hospitable to a relatively wide range of traditions and cultures.

For each Psalm the book provides:

- The complete NRSV text, set with regular and bold face type and pointed, for responsive reading or chanting;
- A Christological Psalm Prayer (reminiscent of the LBW Minister’s Desk Edition)
- A brief footnote that discusses the form of the psalm and a range of usage in Christian worship.
- One or (most often) more settings of the psalm for congregational use.

Here are two examples of the resources available for Psalms 1 and 2:

Psalm 1

Text set for responsive reading or chanting
Psalm prayer
Metrical verses (on the theme of “trees”) set to DIX
Metrical version set to WINCHESTER OLD
Responsorial setting
Tune and text from Thailand (one verse in Thai language)
A baptismal litany drawn from the psalm
Contemporary Spanish hymn (full text in both Spanish and English)
Setting from the Iona Community

Psalm 2

Text set for responsive reading or chanting
Psalm prayer
Metrical hymn
Dramatized reading (text coupled with CHRIST IST ERSTANDEN)

Responsorial setting
Litany for Responsible Exercise of Authority

Some may wonder, given its origins, how much Reformed theology creeps into the resource. As long as one is comfortable with the NRSV text, there are really no theological problems. The psalm prayers are succinct and simply link the text to Christ (much like the psalm prayers in the *LBW Minister's Desk Edition*).

Perhaps your congregation already has a robust practice in place for singing the Psalms. If not, or if you are looking for a wider variety of ways to sing the Psalms, this is a resource you will want on your shelf.

David Christian
Assistant Director of Sanctuary Worship
Carmel Lutheran Church
Carmel IN

