

# Liturgical Formation & Footprints of God

## 'Psalter' in Common Worship

'Psalter' is just another name for a book containing the psalms, especially if designed for worship. The Provincial Lectionary gives the appropriate psalm readings for morning, evening, and Holy Eucharistic services. The Provincial Lectionary is adapted from the Common Lectionary published by the Church of England, giving it a more Asian setting and identity in which we draw all Anglicans together. It is widely used by Roman Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians, and many more churches that are beginning to use it. There are some new variations to the reading of the Psalms, which have been added. Therefore, it is necessary to familiarise ourselves with how the Common Worship – *Daily Prayer* has set out the Psalms.

The Psalter plays a significant role in the service of the Word. The service specifies a psalm, a hymn or a song based on a Psalm or another scriptural passage as one of the elements "normally" required in service, whether a main service on a Sunday or a form of daily prayer. These may be said or sung in the traditional way, but it is also possible to use a metrical version, a responsive form or a paraphrase.

### Where to find the use of Psalter?

The Common Lectionary uses psalms, which are also set out in the Provincial Lectionary and produced yearly. The morning and evening prayer psalms follow a sequential pattern and are available as an e-book through your church. The intention is to ensure that every member can access them to encourage daily readings and read all the Psalms. (*Provincial Lectionary book 2024, page 76*) In Common worship and *daily prayer*, each psalm is given a suggested refrain and a psalm prayer (sometimes called a psalm collect). You will find this if you use the app called 'Daily Prayer' For different pastoral occasions, the provincial lectionary provides the readings and the psalms. This is a

new inclusion in how the reader reads and guides the congregation.

The Common Worship version of the Psalms is based on the version in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer of the Episcopal Church in the U.S.A., which, checked against the original languages (1775 printing of the English Book of Common Prayer), seems to have deliberate echoes of the 'Coverdale translation of the Bible' psalms. Some churches may use a simpler version of English or modern English when reading. But in most cases, Churches have chosen to use their familiar translation. Similar adaptations have taken place when other languages are used.

There are churches where the psalms are chanted, which is a good practice, but not everyone is familiar with English chant. Some psalms have marks to show where to change notes when chanting, and the psalms and canticles are pointed for using Anglican chant. This is published by the Royal School of Church Music ([www.rscm.com](http://www.rscm.com))

When you do not use the refrain and the psalm collects, is there another way of ending the Psalm? Churches are accustomed to the doxology, sometimes called '*Gloria Patri*', *to end the psalm when it is cited in the morning and evening prayer*. The doxology also gives each psalm a Christian context for interpretation. In the daily prayer of Common worship, there is an alternative version of the doxology: 'Glory to God Source of all being, Eternal Word and Holy Spirit'. However, it seems to be a popular 'expansive language,' alternative to the trinitarian doxology that has been used in places for decades, often in places where they try to avoid using gendered language for God.

The 'diamond' in the middle of each verse marks a point at which those using the psalm may choose to pause ( a common practice in monastic communities). This breaks each

# Liturgical Formation & Footprints of God

‘Psalter’ in Common Worship

verse into two sections, and some psalms work well with each verse split between two groups (one group takes the first half of the verse, and the other takes the second half after the diamond). Switching responsively mid-verse is instead a new practice and does not make sense. But then again, it is another way of reading the psalms.

## The optional refrains

In the Common Worship Daily prayer, each psalm is printed with an optional refrain (sometimes called an ‘antiphon’), which can be used differently.

- ◆ At the beginning and end of the psalm (using after the doxology, if this is included)
- ◆ If the psalm itself is being said or sung by a singing voice, there can be useful signs of congregational participation at the beginning and end of several points during the psalm, as marked in a special marker ®.

## The optional Psalm prayers

Each psalm is concluded with a Christian prayer. There are different ways of using these psalm prayers. The prayer can be said by the congregation together or by a leader. The big question is, in what order?

- ◆ The psalm prayer can be used instead of a doxology, fulfilling a similar purpose.
- ◆ If the doxology is also to be used (not recommended), the psalm prayer comes afterwards.
- ◆ If you are using the doxology, the refrain and the psalm prayer (definitely is not recommended) as they come in that order.

The real point is to leave a suitable silence before using the psalm prayer to ‘collect

together’ the individual reflections and prayers of those present.

As the church navigates towards the new format of saying the Psalms in the Common Worship it will certainly take time educate the congregation. Take time to teach and explain and gradually use the new format. Lean to enjoy saying the psalms and encourage members to write and add music in the contemporary way to the psalms. There is so much we can learn and sing through the psalms and it is another good way of reading the bible.

---

Written by  
Bishop Charles Samuel

*In 1535, Myles Coverdale, an Augustinian friar influenced by the works of Martin Luther and other reformers, translated and produced the first complete English Bible ever printed. Coverdale continued the work of William Tyndale's translation.*

*Coverdale used his working intermediate knowledge of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek; not being a Hebrew or Greek scholar, he worked primarily from German Bibles—Luther's Bible and the Swiss German version (Zurich Bible) of the Hulrych Zwingli and Leo Ju—and Latin sources, including the Vulgate.*

## Reference

1. Coverdale bible version <http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/1928/Psalms.htm>
2. Paul Bradshaw(ed) A companion to Common Worship Vol 1 London S.P.C.K. 200 Chapter 10
3. Mark Earey and Gilly Myers (eds) Common Worship Today – Study edition, Nottingham; St. John's Extension Studies 2007 Chapter 16.