

THE SALTSHAKER

A PUBLICATION OF COVENANT REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

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Singing Psalms and Hymns and Spiritual Songs

By Rev. Sean McCann

In the last week you received an email notifying you that we are making some changes in the songbooks we use in our worship gatherings. I am excited about these changes and want to use this edition of the Saltshaker to outline them and to introduce you to the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*. At one level these are small and simple changes that many of you will hardly notice; but on another level these are significant changes that deserve the attention I hope to give them. Changes are always hard, and changes in the music ministry of a church are never small matters (they are called the “worship wars” for a reason!), so we prayerfully approach these changes with our shared commitment to pursue together the peace and purity of the church.

This discussion began months ago with the pressing issue that both songbooks in our pew racks (the red *Trinity Hymnal* and the yellow *With Heart and Voice*) are falling apart. I have seen many of you struggle to fit the books back into the rack after using them, and the hymnals in particular are showing serious signs of wear and tear. For this reason, the Session began to consider what changes, if any, could be made to assist and improve our congregational singing.

A few things went into our consideration. First and foremost was the desire to preserve the rich tradition of hymnary that is contained in the *Trinity Hymnal*. According to the *Hymnal* introduction, this tradition draws songs from the eras of church history that are “faithfully based on God’s word, clearly teach the doctrines of grace, and facilitate the biblical worship of God among his people,” so any new songbook would need to continue to draw on that tradition. A second consideration recognized that the writing of hymns and spiritual songs has not ceased, and there continues to be the healthy production of new songs that enhance reformed worship. Our church recognized these contributions when we assembled *With Heart and Voice* in 2014; so, any new songbooks would need to draw on this stream as well.

The third and final consideration was to recognize the oldest tradition of them all for the singing of God’s people: the Psalms. Since both the *Trinity Hymnal* and *With Heart and Voice* include versions of many of the psalms, which we often supplement with bulletin inserts, any new songbook should include and feature the psalms.

With those three considerations in mind, the Session turned to the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* to serve as our new primary songbook. Of the three considerations, it is the third that the *Psalter Hymnal* most clearly address. The *Psalter Hymnal* is both a psalter (a book of psalms set to singable meters and tunes) and a hymnal. It contains versions of all 150 psalms, with most psalms represented with multiple versions. (For example, Psalm 23 has multiple versions, listed as 23A, 23B, etc.) By singing the psalms we are singing the very words written and commanded by God for his people to sing: “Let the word of Christ dwell in your richly... singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Col 3:16, cf. Eph 5:19). Jesus concluded the first Passover dinner by singing a “hymn” (Matt 26:30), most likely the last part of the *Hallel* Psalms (114-118). The early church mingled psalm-singing with their prayers (Acts 4:24ff) and made psalm-singing a regular part of worship (1 Cor 14:15, 26). In the second century, Tertullian recorded that “psalm singing was not only an essential feature of the worship of the day, but also had become an important part of the daily life of the people.” Even through the Middle Ages and the years of the Reformation, despite all the theological arguments and divisions, the consistent witness of the church was to sing the psalms.

So, the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* will serve us well in our general pattern of singing at least one psalm in each of our worship services, while also providing the bulk of the hymns and songs that fill out the rest of our singing.

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January–February

Upcoming Events

For more information about any of these events, refer to our website (www.covenantreformed.net), of the church office (828-253-6578; office@covenantreformed.net).

The Lord’s Supper

Please prepare your hearts in advance to take of the sacrament together.

During Morning Worship:	During Evening Worship:
January 1, 15	January 29
February 5, 19	

Shepherding Groups:

February 5, following morning worship.

Weekly Events

Sunday:			
Sunday School	9:30 am		
Morning Worship	10:45 am		
Evening Worship	6:00 pm	Except for 1st Sundays	

Wednesday Evenings:

Supper	6:00 pm
Bible Study/Prayer	6:45 pm

Bible Study

For Men:		
Men’s Prayer Breakfast	8:00 am	2nd & 4th Saturdays
ROMEOS	8:00 am	Every Thursday
<i>(Retired Old Men Eating Out)</i>		
at Cornerstone Restaurant, Tunnel Road		
Norm Bomer’s Home	7:00 pm	1st & 3rd Thursdays
For Women:		
Gail Albee’s Home	9:30 am	Every Tuesday

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Starting at number 151 (after the 150 psalms), the *Psalter Hymnal* continues with over 400 hymns that include the vast majority of our congregation's most loved and sung hymns from the *Trinity Hymnal*, as well as adding over thirty songs that have been written and produced in the thirty years since the *Trinity Hymnal* was published. In this way, the *Psalter Hymnal* fulfills the first two considerations by both preserving the rich deposit of hymns, while also recognizing the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the church.

And yet, despite all these considerations and the positive benefits of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*, the reality is that change is never easy, especially when it comes to the songs that we sing and the books we use to sing them from. While this is not the first time that we have made changes to our primary songbook, it has been over thirty years since the last change, so let me close by addressing a few potential objections.

"I love our worship liturgy and don't want it to change." The changes you will see in our worship in the coming year will be very small, and for the better. In an average year we sing 316 psalms/hymns/songs across our worship services: the vast majority of those in the coming year will be exactly what you are used to, just from a much-improved songbook (clearer typeface, enlarged musical notations, not on bulletin inserts, etc). The biggest difference is that we now have many more psalms to choose from for our morning Psalm of Thanksgiving and our evening Psalm of Praise. Our somewhat limited list of psalms will be greatly expanded to include the wide variety of themes found in the Psalms – praise, confession, sorrow, complaint, thanksgiving, trust, etc. We now have at our fingertips the divinely inspired psalms that - in the words of the church father Athanasius - "embrace the whole life of men, the affections of his mind, and the motions of his soul."

"I love the *Trinity Hymnal* and don't want to change." I too love the *Trinity Hymnal*. For me the biggest change will be getting used to the new numbers and not knowing where to find

my favorite songs, at least until I get used to it. However, the reality is that while God and his word never change, songbooks always do, (except the psalms of course!) The current version of the red *Trinity Hymnal* revised the original blue version by adding over 150 new selections, so even the Revision Committee recognized the need for regular revisions and improvements.

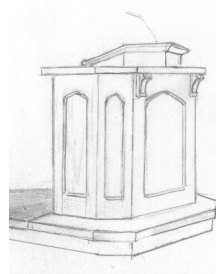
"My favorite hymn is not in the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*." For many of us this is probably the first thing we will notice. Songbooks are finite and exclusive, so there will most certainly be a few of your favorites not included. But just imagine the size of the book if we included every member's list of favorite hymns and songs – it would surely be too big for our pew racks! This is the reality of our shared life together in the body of Christ: "Love does not insist on its own way...it bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Cor 13:4, 7).

This brings me to the second step in this transition. Starting in early January, the only songbooks you will see in the pew racks will be the new *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*. We will remove both the *Trinity Hymnal* and *With Heart and Voice*. The bindings on *With Heart and Voice* are rapidly deteriorating, so in the coming months we plan to revise and update this "supplementary" songbook. We haven't mapped out these revisions yet, but the conversations among the pastors and musicians have been going on for a while now, so we know that the revisions will at least involve new formatting and binding, the removal of duplicates, and the addition of songs new and old, including a few beloved hymns from the *Trinity Hymnal*.

It is my sincere belief that these changes are born out of the shepherding desires of our elders, and it is my hopeful expectation that they will enrich our worship for years to come. Join me in praying that they are received well, for the upcoming revision project, and that worship at our church continues to glorify our mighty God.

The Sacred Desk

By Mr. Wilson Goins



The three texts that I was privileged to preach this summer were Psalm 51:1-12, Psalm 51:13-19, and the entirety of Psalm 3. In Psalm 51:1-12, viewing David's response to his great sins, my prayer was that we ourselves would be stirred to repentance. Likewise, with Psalm 51:13-19, my prayer was that the Spirit would create in us a desire to be reconciled to God. No doubt, these messages from Psalm 51 even affect how we worship. Like David, it is when we behold the gravity of our sin against the backdrop of the holiness of God, we can rightly express our gratitude in worship. David reveals this truth in his determination

to declare the graciousness of God to others. The *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* puts it so well: "The joy of your salvation, Lord, restore; uphold me with a free and willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors all your ways, and sinners will return again to serve you" (*TPH* 51A). Then, in Psalm 3, we saw a dissection of the Christian's heart as he calls out to God for delivery. This situation is not unique to David, but we will each face trials in our lives. Psalm 3 is the believer's battle hymn. When it feels as if everyone is against us, we can again sing from our new *Psalter*: "You are my shield and glory, Lord, the lifter of my head. I cried out 'Lord!' And from his hill his answer to me sped" (*TPH* 3). What a blessing is an inspired hymn book which captures the depths of human emotion before God? Without question, the *Psalter* is forever relevant for preaching, teaching, and of course singing!

Preaching Schedule

Date	Morning	Evening
Jan. 1	Matt. 14:1-12	
Jan. 8	Matt. 14:13-21	2 Sam. 24
Jan. 15	Matt. 14:22-26	Officer Install
Jan. 22	Matt. 15:1-20	TBD
Jan. 29	Matt. 15:21-31	TBD
Feb. 5	Matt. 15:32-39	
Feb. 12	Matt. 16:1-12	Hosea 1:1-9
Feb. 19	Matt. 16:13-23	Hosea 1:10-2:1
Feb. 26	Matt. 16:24-28	Hosea 2:2-13

Four Benefits of the New Trinity Psalter Hymnal

By Rev. Jim Curtis

Singing the Psalms is not just commanded by the Scriptures, but in line with our rich liturgical heritage in the Reformed tradition. Terry Johnson remarks, "The distinctive musical contribution of the Reformed Churches to Christendom has been the congregational singing of the Psalms." Yet, he rightly points out that a modern believer is more likely to be struck by lightning at church than to sing a Psalm. As the members of CRPC know, this is a tragedy. St. Athanasius said that the Psalms "embrace the whole life of men, the affections of his mind, and the motions of his soul". God has given us a rich body of songs in the Psalms and singing them enriches beyond our comprehension.

I am elated for these reasons—among others—to move to the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal (TPH)*. As Pastor Sean mentions, this is not because of any distaste for the *Trinity Hymnal* or any inherent deficiency in it. The addition of a *Psalter* to the hymnal in the *TPH* ought to be seen less as an improvement and more as an enormous benefit. I hope to show you this by pointing out a few additions to the *TPH* that I am particularly excited about.

Psalms with Familiar Tunes

I did not grow up with a hymnal, much less a *Psalter*. One feature of the *Psalter* of the *TPH* which will be of great use to CRPC is the familiar tunes of so many of the Psalms. For example, 67B is a metrical Psalm set to Gustav Holst's *Jupiter*, familiar to us by being the tune for *O God Beyond All Praising* (#241 in the *TPH*; which also gains a third verse!). Psalm 24B, similarly, is set to *Joanna*, the tune for *Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise*. I am very thankful that the *TPH* chose this route, so that any transition from the *Trinity Hymnal* seems natural.

Psalms from Familiar Hymns

Similar to tunes which are familiar, the *TPH* moves several Psalm settings in the Hymnal to the *Psalter*. *All People That on Earth Do Dwell* is now Psalm 100B. *Hail to the Lord's Anointed* is Psalm 72B. One of my all-time favorites, *Hallelujah, Praise Jehovah, O My Soul* is now Psalm 146. A regular Psalm we sing is *God, Be Merciful to Me*, which is now Psalm 51B. I love this move, because it shows that as often as the church has been singing these hymns, they've been singing Psalms! The move to the *TPH* both adds Psalms we haven't had, while keeping many we are already familiar with.

New Hymns

The *TPH* doesn't just give us a new and yet familiar *Psalter*, it also provides for us a selection of hymns not found in the *Trinity Hymnal*. The *TPH* adds more than 60 hymns not found in the *Trinity Hymnal*, many of which will be new—to us. One that I am particularly looking forward to is *TPH* 199, *Zion, to Thy Savior Singing*; this is a Lord's Supper hymn that is "new" to us but was written by Thomas Aquinas around 1260! *TPH* 235 is a wonderful little hymn, *All Glory Be to God*, which is as deep as it is short. Finally, one which caught my eye as a must-learn for us was *TPH*

333, *Hosanna, Loud Hosanna*; this hymn reflects on the triumphal entry, but particularly from the perspective of the children. The first verse is incredibly powerful:

Hosanna, loud hosanna, the little children sang; through pillared court and temple the lovely anthem rang; to Jesus, who had blessed them, close folded to his breast, the children sang their praises, the simplest and the best.

Hymns Which Are Familiar—But Not in the Trinity Hymnal

I purposefully saved this category for last, as I think this is where most people will focus their attention. Instead, I hope the layout I've suggested puts the emphasis on the incredible benefit of an added *Psalter* and new hymns brought to the table by the *TPH*.

Nevertheless, many familiar hymns jump out to me as worth mentioning here as additions to the physical book in our pews. As expected, the *TPH* adds two Gettys hymns (*In Christ Alone*, and *Speak, O Lord*). James Montgomery Boices' work also accounts for five additions: *Give Praise to God*; *All Praise to Christ*; *How Marvelous, How Wise, How Great*; *Come to the Waters*; and *Hallelujah!*

Further additions which are familiar include: *How Deep the Father's Love For Us*, *I Asked the Lord that I Might Grow* (though the tune may be unfamiliar—a wonderful hymn!), *Before the Throne of God Above*, and *Come Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy*.

All-in-all, after perusing the *TPH*, I firmly believe our congregation will see why so many churches have adopted this new book for congregational worship. It carries the legacy of the *Trinity Hymnal* stretching back to the original 1961 through the beloved "Red" edition (revised) from 1994, while adding an entire *Psalter* to the church's song book. While change is always, by matter of degrees, difficult, CRPC will find the *TPH* to be like the younger brother to what we all know and love about the *Trinity Hymnal*.

In an effort to show my age, I am also thankful for the advent of modern technology in aiding the church's worship that comes with the *TPH*. I am not a singer, nor have I ever learned to sing—indeed, I only know how to read the basics of sheet music from my middle school band days. I am incredibly grateful, then, for the new mobile app. Just search for "Trinity Psalter Hymnal" in the app store. It does cost \$10, but the app includes the sheet music and a music player to listen to the accompaniment. I have already used it in preparation for worship here and have found it incredibly useful.

Friends, after researching and perusing the new *TPH*, I am truly delighted CRPC has moved to it. And as we look to put together a new edition of *Heart & Voice* this year, you can be sure that our congregation will have the absolute best to choose from in singing to our Lord and God. Indeed, as Edward Caswell wrote in his wonderful hymn:

*Be this the eternal song through all the ages long:
May Jesus Christ be praised!*