

Children's Sing Psalms

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Editor's Foreword

Let everything that has breath burst into song praising God! With that in mind, what better place to begin than the psalms, the Songs of David. As Walter Brueggemann states in his book *The Message of the Psalms*, "The psalms permit the faithful to enter at whatever level they are able—in ways primitive or sophisticated, limited or comprehensive, candid or guarded. The faithful, of all sorts and conditions, with varying skills and sensitivities, here find the bread of life as abiding nourishment."

This collection of fifteen psalm settings provides a wide variety of involvement from the very young to the very old. In many of the compositions you will find a choir of children taking the lead in teaching a refrain to the assembly with a cantor or a choir giving expression to the verses. As an assembly, we are together at this moment in worship, experiencing one another as the body of Christ.

Use these psalms repeatedly throughout the three year Revised Common Lectionary. A lectionary index is included in the collection. Sing them whenever they appear until they become a part of the singers' memory. In my thirty years of working and writing about children in worship, my presentations at worship conferences have specifically encouraged directors to teach the psalms to children. The refrains in this collection can be a beginning. Keep them alive for children by writing a psalm number on a card and ask them either to sing the refrain to a particular psalm or to recite the words. Give them bread for nourishment, as Bruggemann proposed, and allow the psalms to be the nourishment children and congregations together carry with them on their faith journey.

The composers of this collection have enhanced the psalm verses with a variety of styles: adding handbells, Orff instruments, non-pitched instruments, and, as in one selection, a cello. It is with a deep sense of appreciation that I applaud Michael Bedford, Dorothy Christopherson, Jayne Southwick Cool, John Helgen, John Horman, Shirley McRae, and Mark Patterson for their musical offerings. I also added two psalms to this collection, along with teaching suggestions for each psalm in the collection.

Sing the psalms, pray the psalms, and let them speak to the hearts, minds, and lives of all the faithful.

~Marilyn Comer
October, 2008

References to BCP are to *The Book of Common Prayer* (1979).

ChildrenSing Psalms
Marilyn Comer, editor

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13 12 11 10 09 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Psalm 1

Psalm 1 is an excellent opportunity to use two choirs. One sings the refrain while the other sings the verses.

Begin teaching by experiencing the feeling of three beats to a measure through body percussion: pat legs on 1, clap hands on 2, snap fingers on 3. Keep it slow and steady while the leader speaks the words in rhythm.

Make a card from poster board with these notes:



Ask the singers to look carefully at the card while the leader sings sol-mi-do; the singers echo.

Distribute copies of the music. On the first page, beginning with the first staff line, with their pointer finger moving from left to right, stop on the measure that matches the card (*measure 10*). Ask them to name the staff lines and the words.

Continue to the next staff line. Repeat this pattern each time, asking for the words before singing the words on sol-mi-do.

To encourage the feeling of the rest in measure 7, bring the palms of both hands together with little sound. Hold in place for the three beat pattern, releasing on the first beat of the next measure.

Psalm 1

JDH, based on Ps. 1

John D. Horman

With delight (♩ = 116)

Keyboard

mf

poco rit.

Unison voices

5 ***f*** Refrain

Hap - py are those who day by day fol - low God's

a tempo

10 ***mf***

teach - ing and walk in God's way. Hap - py are those who

15 *f*

day by day fol - low, fol - low, _____

20 *To verse*

fol - low God's teach - ing and walk in God's way.

Verse 1
25 *mf*

Their great de - light is the law of the LORD.

29

In it they med - i - tate both day and night.