

Getting Started (Revised 3/30/2014)

1. The following tunes seem to have a special combination of characteristics that work with nearly every passage in the Psalter: Coleshill (22), Eden (42), Evan (48), Kilmarnock (73), St. Andrew (116), St. Etheldreda (123) and St. Peter (141).
2. Keep in mind that each syllable of a word is sung in the Psalter. When there is an apostrophe, the word is shortened. "Combined" is sung "com-bin-ed", but "combin'd" is sung "com-bind". (Psalm 2:2) An exception is the Psalter's rendition of "commandements"; we sing "com-ma-and-ments". (Psalm 119:96)
3. It is advisable to practice each selection before leading others to understand how the words line up with the notes.
4. Many find it helpful to learn one tune at a time. All Psalms (except Psalm 136) can be sung to a CM tune.
5. Some prefer beginning with favorite CM hymn tunes to get familiar with the words, and later learn new tunes. (See below 'Encouraging New Psalm Singers'.)
6. The Calendar divides the Psalms; however, many Psalms can be sung in one sitting using one tune in order to maintain the full context.
7. There are a variety of ways to break a Psalm into smaller portions. Some of these options are provided in the Calendar and on the Tune pages (#1-180). The Tune pages provide Psalter selections which others have used as well as selections from the Calendar.
8. The highlighted tunes in the Calendar are a means to sing a preferred Psalm portion for each of the 180 tunes. These do not always denote what we consider the best selection for that tune, but rather the first time the tune is used as a first or second choice.
9. The majority of the tunes selected are simple melodies and easy to learn. This is especially true for Common Meter (CM) tunes. (An explanation of "CM" is found on pages 183-185.)
10. The 1650 Psalter is traditionally sung a cappella (without any instruments).
11. Singing at a slower pace will allow the singers opportunity to reflect on what is sung.

Encouraging New Psalm Singers

Some people may find using the familiar tunes helpful; others may find it distracting. Many people enjoy learning new tunes. Nearly everyone knows "Amazing Grace" (Tune: New Britain) which may be the tune to use when first learning the Psalter. Many tunes in the Psalter will already be familiar to people coming from mainline church backgrounds-- for example, Duke Street ("Jesus shall reign, where'er the sun"); Old 100th ("All people that on earth do dwell"); Artaxerxes/Arlington ("Am I a Soldier of the Cross?"); Crimond ("The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want"); Denfield/Azmon ("O for a thousand tongues to sing"); St. Anne ("O God, our help in ages past"). For more assistance see the sections 'Scottish Metrical Psalmody—Poetry and Meter Explained' and 'Poetic Mood' in "Psalmody 101" (pp. 182-189).