

Results of Hymnal Research: Psalter

Raw Data

This survey targeted specifically pastors, worship planners, and chief musicians (whether identified as such, or as choir directors or as accompanists who plan music) regarding the Psalter. The rationale for this targeting is that these are the people who are most directly involved in using the Psalter for worship planning and in leading the performance of Psalms in worship. They are thus in the best position to indicate how the psalms are used in worship, and to have an understanding of what the congregation can perform well and would be making the decisions about what the congregation would use or what they would want have available for their use.

As in other targeted surveys, not all persons who actually completed the survey fit these narrower categories. Thus, while the cumulative data (see spreadsheet and analysis below) include a larger number of people, the data we will use for reporting will reflect only those who fit the stated criteria.

We are trying in this survey to establish two things. First, what is the **scope** of the Psalter that these leaders would expect in a new hymnal. Second, what are the **formats** for Psalms they would find most helpful in a new hymnal.

Cumulative Data

300 people total completed the survey. Of these, 176 were pastors or worship planners and 82 were chief musicians/choir directors for a total of 258 valid responses. Not all persons surveyed answered all questions. Not all questions were forced choice. And not all persons who took the survey were part of the targeted sample. Hence, responses to any given question do not necessarily add up to any specific total either cumulatively or for any given category.

Contents of the Psalter

1. Which Psalms to Include

119 responded with a preference for the entire psalter to be included in a new hymnal
133 responded with a preference to include the entire RCL selections of the Psalter in a new hymnal

Pastors and Worship Planners:

83 preferred for the entire psalter to be included.
87 preferred just the RCL selections be included.

Musicians/Music Leaders

36 preferred the entire Psalter to be included
46 preferred just the RCL selections be included

There is a slight preference among both groups for the RCL selections.

2. Languages other than English for the Psalter

A total of 29 indicated interest in languages other than English for the Psalter. Of these, 19 were pastors or worship planners. The remaining 10 were musicians.

This sample has little interest in a Psalter that includes languages other than English.

3. Psalms outside the Psalter

195 want a new Psalter to include Psalms outside the Psalter (biblical and traditional canticles)
132 pastors/worship planners
63 musicians

There is strong support for including Psalms outside the Psalter in a new hymnal.

Conclusions:

Overall, this sample prefers a Psalter for a US Hymnal that includes:

- 1) the Revised Common Lectionary Psalms (by a small margin)
- 2) Psalms outside the Psalter (by a substantially larger margin),
- 3) all in English (by a very large margin) for a new US Hymnal.

The margin of difference between a full Psalter and an RCL-only Psalter is so small as to be potentially insignificant. More research will need to be done to establish the preferences of a larger sampling of the church.

This sample more clearly prefers that Psalms outside the Psalter (biblical and traditional canticles) be included in any new hymnal (76% of respondents).

This sample is not interested in including Psalms in the Psalter in a language other than English (only 11% of respondents indicated a preference for additional languages).

Format of the Psalter

1. Musical Responses, Responsive Reading, and Pointed for Chant (Current UMH)

108 total prefer this format
76 pastors/worship planners
32 musicians/music leaders

2. Musical Responses and Responsive Reading Only (Eliminating pointing for chant)

80 total prefer this format (discounting those who responded to both)
60 pastors/worship planners
20 musicians/music leaders

3. Psalms Set as Songs

114 total wish to see Psalms set as songs
76 pastors/worship planners
38 musicians/music leaders

4. A Mixed Format Psalter—Songs, Responses, Some Pointing

130 total prefer a mixed format Psalter
77 pastors/worship planners
53 musicians/music leaders

5. Full Accompaniments for Psalms/Songs Included in the Hymnal

142 prefer that full accompaniments appear in the pew edition
103 pastors/worship planners
41 musicians/music leaders

6. Full Accompaniments for Psalms/Songs Included in Accompaniment Edition Only

99 prefer this format (some duplicated)
62 pastors/worship planners
37 musicians/music leaders

Conclusions:

The most frequently preferred format for a new Psalter is a mixed format Psalter that includes Psalms set as responsive readings with musical responses and some pointing for chant as well as some Psalms set as songs.

A Psalter like the current UM Psalter (set as responsive readings with musical responses and pointed for chant) is less preferred to a mixed format Psalter, but is more preferred than a Psalter set similarly but without pointing for chant. This is an interesting finding given that the vast majority of our churches do not normally use chant. What this result may indicate is a preference to include the option, whether it is used or not.

This sample also substantially prefers that the full accompaniment for any musical settings of the Psalms or responses appear in the pew hymnal as well as in any accompaniment edition (55% vs. 37%, with 8% not responding, and some responding to both options).