**Psalm Books & Resources**

**The Scottish Psalter** (1650) was used exclusively in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland until 1880 when a revision was carried out to “*remove erroneous renderings, errors of syntax, faulty rhymes, obsolete words, or want of correspondence between the rhythm of sense and the rhythm of sound.*” Twenty-seven new alternative or “Second” versions were added to *“give a little more variety in metre than is found in the Scottish version.”* This became known as the **Irish Psalter** and has remained the “official” version used in all our hymnbooks since 1880. Uniquely among hymnbooks the words and the music are printed on split pages enabling a variety of tunes to be used to a particular psalm.

The 1880 Irish Psalter can be found in the following books

* **Church Hymnary** (1898) containing the Irish Psalter (1880)
* **Revised Church Hymnary** (1927) containing the Irish Psalter (1880)
* **Church Hymnary 3rd Edition** (1973) containing the Irish Psalter (1880) but with revision of the keys and harmonisations of some of the tunes so that they correspond with those in the hymnbook
* **The Irish Presbyterian Hymnbook** (2004) containing the Irish Psalter (1880) with tunes as in CH3

*Only the Irish Presbyterian Hymnbook is currently in print.*

The decision of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in 1995 not to collaborate with the Church of Scotland in the production of the Church Hymnary Fourth Edition led to the production of our own Irish Presbyterian Hymnbook in 2004. The feedback from a survey carried out by the Public Worship Committee in 1999 was largely that we should keep the Irish Psalter unaltered in the new hymnbook.

**Church Hymnary Fourth Edition**

The Church of Scotland took a different approach in its 2005 book. While retaining psalms in a separate section at the start, not every psalm is represented, and some psalms appear in more than one version. Some metrical versions from the Scottish Psalter (as revised in 1929) are included but there are also modern versions (some really just hymns based on a psalm), prose psalms (set to chants), antiphonal psalms and responsorial psalms.

Other Presbyterian denominations have recently produced revised versions of the psalms.

**The Psalms for Singing - A 21st Century Edition** produced by **The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland** in 2004.

This version aims to be an accurate rendering of the original but with meaning that can be readily understood, eliminating the archaic language, contorted syntax and awkward and contracted words found in older versions. Some “*well-loved Scottish metrical versions are retained as alternatives*. The “split page” arrangement of words and tunes is retained and some new tunes and metres are included. This version bears a strong resemblance to the Irish Psalter but with modernised word versions though largely retaining the displacement of words to force a rhyme.

**Sing Psalms produced by The Free Church of Scotland in 2003.**

This takes a similar approach to The Psalms for Singing in seeking to eliminate archaic language etc. While there are a few versions in common, these versions are mostly different to those found in **The Psalms for Singing**. Words only and music and words editions are both published.

The complete words for all the psalms can be freely downloaded in Word and pdf versions from <https://freechurch.org/praise-resources/> or see **Downloadable Materials for Psalms**

**The Portglenone Psalms** by **Rev. Albert Baxter**

This book sprang from a desire to help the people of First Portglenone Presbyterian Church (where he has ministered since 1985) sing the psalms with understanding using “comprehensible English, with metre, rhythm, rhyme and tunes that are familiar in Irish Presbyterian worship.” It is a words-only book, but a tune is suggested for each psalm. Many of these are tunes traditionally used for the metrical psalms as well as those used commonly in hymn books. Helpfully the hymn or psalm with which the tune is often used is included – so if “St Anne” doesn’t mean anything to you, the author includes a reference to “O God our help in ages past”. A helpful subject index is also included.

Copies of the book are available from the Author. In addition, he has generously made the complete text of the Portglenone Psalms and an Index of Tunes freely available to users of this website. [See **Downloadable Materials for Psalms**]

**The Book of Psalms for Singing** – **Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America** (1973 -1978)

This book has over 425 versions include all 150 Psalms in their entirety. Many psalm passages are set to multiple arrangements. Settings include many familiar hymn tunes, traditional tunes, some original arrangements and a few chants. Translated from the original language into English metre for singing. Includes SATB part music for each selection and five indices.

**The Complete Book of Psalms for Singing** by Roland Ward published by the **Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia** (1991)..

This book, which is probably now out of print (none currently available on Amazon!!) is a mixture of traditional and modern metrical version set mostly to well-known tunes. It includes some study notes for each psalm. The type-setting and printing are uneven and not of a high quality, but it does contain some interesting versions if you can find a second-hand copy.

**Psalms for All Seasons** – A Complete Psalter for Worship. Produced by the **Calvin Institute of Christian Worship** (2012)

For each of the 150 psalms this book included the complete NRSV text, a prayer that responds to a theme, imagery or basic intent of the psalm, a brief footnote on the psalm and one or more musical settings of each psalm.

This is a much less like a traditional “presbyterian” psalter. There are some well-known tunes, but many will not be familiar and a significant number are less than likely to be used in PCI! Quite a number of different languages are used.

**Psalms for the Common Era -** Hebrew Psalms in Modern Metrical English for Individuals, Choirs and Congregations by [**Adam Carlill**](https://www.amazon.co.uk/s/ref%3Ddp_byline_sr_book_1?ie=UTF8&field-author=Adam+Carlill&text=Adam+Carlill&sort=relevancerank&search-alias=books-uk) (Independently published 2018)

Produced for use in the Anglican Tradition to encourage congregational singing *‘in ways they can feel at home with’* as an alternative to chanted or responsorial psalms. The author’s aim was to produce *‘fresh and lively versions’* which remain true to the original Hebrew text. There is no corresponding music version, but a hymn tune (mostly well-known) is given for each psalm as well as the metre enabling a better-known alternative to be found. Gender neutral language is generally used. Available to purchase on Amazon.

**New Psalter** – **Psalms for the Church** produced by **Grace Music US**.

This American collection includes a variety of metrical psalms spanning the wide spectrum between the literal and the paraphrase. All 150 psalms appear, with many psalms rendered in more than one versification and setting, making for a total of 341 songs. It includes a tune index arranged alphabetically; a metrical index of tunes; an index of authors, composers, and sources; and an index of titles and first lines.

As well as hard copy books being available to purchase ([www.gracemusic.us](http://www.gracemusic.us)) all the items are available as individual digital downloads – words only and words & music. Most of them may be displayed or duplicated for corporate worship unaltered without a CCLI Licence.

The website also contains a large collection of other sheet music and instrumental arrangements.

**Mirror to the Soul – 30 Contemporary Hymns based on Psalms** by **Timothy Dudley Smith** (RSCM 2013)

A useful collection with tunes which the author says, “*are not translations, not always even paraphrases, but hymns based on the original psalm.”*