

# RE-IMAGINING THE PSALMS FOR CHRISTIAN FORMATION

Session for *The Gathering*, 2013



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## Psalm 84

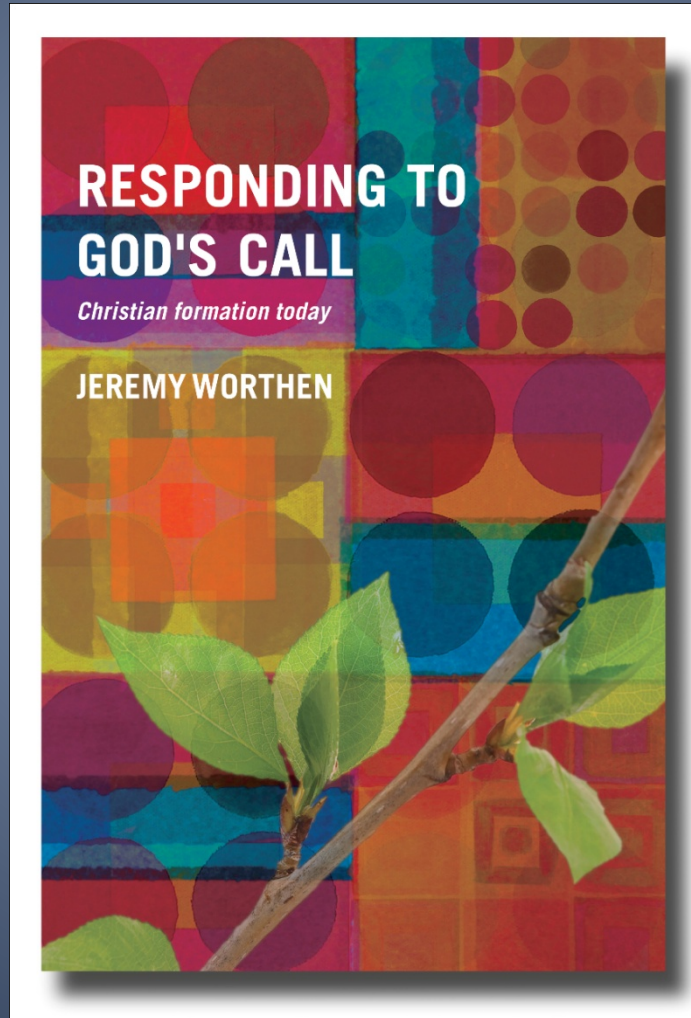
- What are you imagining?

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## Outline:

1. Christian formation and the Psalms
2. The Psalms in the modern world: a strange land?
3. Re-imagining Psalm recitation: meeting others, meeting Christ
4. Re-imagining Psalm 84: the highways to Zion

# 1. Christian formation and the Psalms



# 1. Christian formation and the Psalms

Christian formation:

- How we are shaped by vocation
- God's work, taking place in the life of the Church

Psalm recitation:

- A practice that 'makes space' for that work
- Psalms as formation in action.

# 1. Christian formation and the Psalms

## History:

- Origins in the 4<sup>th</sup>-century monastic movement
- Weekly recitation of whole psalter becomes integral to church life in Middle Ages.



# 1. Christian formation and the Psalms

- Inaccessible to most people, however
- Cranmer tries to make the practice of regular psalm recitation available to all – with considerable success.



## 2. The Psalms in the modern world: a strange land?

Tendency to extract particular passages, rather than sharing the whole journey.

Psalms as words of *other* people – imagination unable to reach across the distance:

- The past is a foreign country – historical criticism
- Absence of Christ – hymns and revival
- In my own words – expressive individualism.



### 3. Re-imagining Psalm recitation: meeting others, meeting Christ

Re-imagining...

- Who we are as persons in relation
- Reading as a meeting of persons
- Christ in the meeting
- Words of the Psalms as the words of Christ.

## 4. Re-imagining Psalm 84: the highways to Zion

Pilgrim Psalm:

- 'Blessed are they who dwell in your house'
- 'Blessed are those... in whose heart are the highways to Zion'
- 'Blessed are those who put their trust in you.'

## 4. Re-imagining Psalm 84: the highways to Zion

Use of this psalm for the feast of the transfiguration in Western liturgy

- Good to be here – but good to be on the way also
- Life of faith as pilgrimage, movement; discipleship, following Jesus where he goes
- ‘For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell’.

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