It is customary to stand for the opening and closing brakhot of Psukei D'zimra.

Barukh She-amar. Once the inclusion of Psukei D'zimra (“Verses of Song”) was codified by the talmudic geonim (the rabbinic leaders of the influential Babylonian Jewish community in the latter half of the 1st millennium), they ordained that it be preceded and followed with formal blessings: the opening blessing recited here and the blessing at the section’s conclusion (page 148). Most of the passages recited in this section are biblical and, therefore, this prayer calls them “the words of Your faithful servants.” “David’s songs” refers to the psalms, which constitute the bulk of this section; many scholars believe that Psalms 145-150 (pages 136–141) constituted the original core of Psukei D’zimra.

Called the world into being. God is often referred to by the sages as “the one whose word called the world into being.” This is based on the story in Genesis 1, in which all of creation emanates from God’s spoken fiat. For example, on the very first day, “God said, ‘Let there be light’—and there was light” (Genesis 1:3).

Barukh Hu, blessed be the One. The last line of the introductory call and response reads barukh sh’mo, “blessed be the divine name.” Taken together, the first two words of response and the last two words of the series form the phrase barukh hu u-barukh sh’mo, “blessed be the One and blessed be the divine name,” which is commonly used as a response to hearing the name of God. Practices differ as to the call and response during the recitation of this poem. A version that has recently become popular includes reciting the words printed here in gray.

Compassionate creator. The word translated here as “compassionate” comes from the root r-h-m, which also means “womb.” Thus, this particular phrase can be understood as “the fatherly womb,” and wonderfully captures the way that God transcends gender.

Exalt, acclaim, and glorify you. The blessing announces that the psalms to be recited in this section will be those that acclaim God, not those that express the personal plight of the psalmist. Repetition of similar sounding verbal synonyms in Hebrew is a means of creating a meditative atmosphere.