

COMPOSER'S NOTE

These are difficult times for all of us, individually and globally. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted life as normal and called for acts of corporate and individual heroism in the face of present suffering and an uncertain future. People of faith may be struggling to articulate their belief in an all-good and all-powerful God in this new era.

"Shelter Me" -- is my attempt as a church composer to find God's presence even in these fraught times. Based on the beloved Psalm 23, my paraphrase adapts the psalmist's sentiments to respond to our present anxieties:

1. Shepherd and sheep, my God and I:
to fresh green fields you led my steps in days gone by.
You gave me rest by quiet springs
and filled my soul with peace your loving presence brings.

REFRAIN: O shelter me, O shelter me:
The way ahead is dark and difficult to see.
O shelter me, O shelter me:
All will be well if only you will shelter me.

2. Yet now I tread a diff'rent way;
Death dogs my path with stealthy steps from day to day.
I cannot find your peaceful place
But dwell in dreary darkness, longing for your face.

REFRAIN:

3. I will look back in days to come
and realize your faithfulness has led me home.
Within your house I'll find my peace,
trusting that in your mercy you have sheltered me.

REFRAIN:

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While the text is clearly in the first-person singular, reflecting the intimacy of Psalm 23, I believe that, like many spirituals also using "I" language, it can reflect our common experience when sung by an assembly sharing the same experiences.

GIA Publications has graciously agreed to publish a basic melody/piano accompaniment version of the piece at www.onelicense.net. There you should be able to download a high-resolution graphic file of the score, including a combox for reproduction for the

worshipping assembly to use when it is safe for us to return to public worship. I hope that the same source will also make available for listening a sound file for “Shelter Me” using synthesized sound, since orders to “shelter in place” make it impossible to gather for a demo recording at this time in history.

Those who wish may download the score free of charge and may freely reproduce it for use in your worshipping communities until the end of March, 2021. While there is no charge for the download, I’d encourage you to make a donation to groups who are offering physical, emotional and spiritual care in this time of crisis, including Catholic Charities USA, Lutheran Social Services and/or the American Red Cross.

After 31 March 2021, this basic score will be available for purchase. I hope to provide further arrangements of the composition that would also be available for sale at that time for communities who might want to perform the piece using more complex ensembles.

May God sustain us with mercy and compassion as we travel through the valley of the shadow of death to the banquet of eternal life.

Mike Joncas
27 March 2020