

Earthed Examples & Sharing

Which of the above images do you find helpful?

What photos from your own situation would you use with this psalm
What piece of secular music or hymns/songs would best accompany this reading?

What stories and ideas would you share with the preacher or people leading your worship?

Psalm 91 invites us to imagine safeguarding as an expression of God's own character - faithful, gentle, relational, and enduring. What are the images in your context that you could use to redraft your own psalm 91 with up to date images of care and shelter?

To live "under God's wings" is to share in the holy work of making the world, and especially the Church, a refuge for all.

Encourage participants to bring the psalm into lived experience:

- In the Church: Where have we succeeded - or failed - to offer true refuge?
- In Everyday Life: Who in our neighbourhoods needs a "shadow of safety" - the lonely neighbour, the child at risk, the refugee, the overworked parent?
- In Ourselves: What practices help us to rest in God's shelter - prayer, friendship, honest conversation, rest?

- (You might use these prompts for small-group sharing:)
- "When have I experienced God's protection through another person's faithfulness?"
- "What does a 'safe church' look like to me?"
- "How can gratitude or faith make a place feel more secure?"

Closing Prayer

God our Refuge,
you spread your wings
over all who seek you.
Make us feathers
of your mercy and love -
strong enough to shelter,
soft enough to heal.

All:

May your faithfulness
be our shield.
May our lives reflect
your steadfast care.
May every child of yours
find safety beneath your wings.
Amen.



www.heartedge.org

Photo: Tamara Govedarovic, Unsplash.com



HeartBeat

Shelter, Trust, and Faithfulness

Sunday 16th of November

Lectionary Reading:
Psalm 91

Welcome:

Psalm 91 is one of the Bible's most tender images of God's protection - not armour or fortress alone, but feathers, wings, and shadow.

It speaks of safety,
not through power or distance,
but through care
and faithfulness.

Ice Breaker

Safe Places

Invite each person to share briefly:

- A place, person, or moment in your life where you felt deeply safe or protected.
- What made that space or person trustworthy?

Intergenerational option

Use feathers, small stones, or a blanket etc as tactile symbols - "What does feeling safe feel like?"

Opening Prayer

God of shelter and shadow,
you gather us as a mother bird
gathers her young.
Spread your wings over us
— and through us —
that we may become
a refuge for others. Amen.

Reading the Scripture

Read Psalm 91:1–4, 9–12 aloud twice.

- First Reading: Listen simply. Which word or image stands out - feathers, wings, shield, angels, shadow?
- Moments of Silence
- Second Reading: Listen for how God might be speaking to you or to your community through these words.

Share your initial thoughts and responses with one another.

Scaffolding for Learning

Context and Meaning

Psalm 91 is a wisdom psalm. It's part testimony, part divine reassurance. It emerged in times of danger, illness,

or crisis. It doesn't promise immunity from pain but offers trust in the midst of threat.

It unfolds like a dialogue:

1. Trust declared: "My refuge and fortress."
2. Assurance given: God's protection and faithfulness.
3. Divine response: "I will be with them in trouble."

This is not a spell against harm - it's a song of companionship.

Exploring Psalm 91:

"He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge." (v.4)

The psalmist pictures God like a mother bird gathering her young — a tender, nurturing image of safety. This is not the protection of power or control, but of intimacy and care.

- What might it mean for the Church to become a place of shelter rather than supervision?
- Can you recall a time when someone's gentleness made you feel safe or seen?
- How might we create "feathered spaces" in our worship, homes, and communities - spaces where vulnerability is met with warmth rather than fear?

"His faithfulness shall be your shield and buckler." (v.4b)

Protection in this psalm does not come from walls or weapons but from faithfulness - the steadfast reliability of God. Safety begins with trust that is proven true over time.

- When have you known someone whose faithfulness became a kind of shield for you?
- What might faithfulness look like in safeguarding practice - in how we speak, listen, or follow through on promises?
- How can we strengthen trust within our community so that everyone feels protected and valued?

"You will not fear the terror of the night." (v.5)

The psalm does not pretend danger or fear are unreal. It names them honestly — the "terrors of the night" that haunt individuals and communities alike.

- What "night terrors" might people in our community live with - fear of violence, exclusion, silence, or shame?
- How can we become a place where such fears are brought into the light, spoken of, and held safely?
- What helps you personally face fear with courage and faith?

"He shall give his angels charge over you." (v.11)

In this verse, God entrusts protection to others. Angels here can be imagined as human agents of care — parents, teachers, friends, church members, all called to share in God's guardianship.

- Who have been the "angels of protection" in your life - those who looked out for you or stood beside you in hard times?
- In what ways might God be calling you to act as an angel of protection for someone else?
- How can our safeguarding teams,

volunteers, and leaders see their work as a holy trust rather than an administrative duty?

"I will be with them in trouble." (v.15)

God's final promise in the psalm is not the removal of pain but the assurance of presence. To safeguard, then, is to be with - to listen, accompany, and stand beside those who suffer.

- When has someone's presence, more than their words, been a source of safety for you?
- How can our Church reflect this divine "being with" - showing solidarity rather than quick fixes?
- What would it mean for us to measure safeguarding success not by absence of problems but by the depth of our faithful presence?

Wonderings

- I wonder what it means to "dwell in the shadow of the Almighty" when some shadows have felt unsafe.
- I wonder how God's wings might feel - weighty, warm, protective, freeing
- I wonder what it means to trust in God's faithfulness rather than in our own systems or control.
- I wonder where I am called to be an "angel of protection" for someone vulnerable

Intergenerational Wondering

- I wonder how our community, (church or school) could become "feathered shelters" for those who are sad, fearful or excluded.