

# Love is the Spirit of this Church

Tony Larsen

SATB, piano, opt. soloist and speaker



# Elizabeth Alexander

*Seafarer Press*

## Love is the Spirit of this Church

Oh my church is built of neither brick nor stone,  
For it's love that's the spirit of this church.  
It's a shelter fashioned from our hearts alone.  
Yes it's love that's the spirit of this church.

### CHORUS:

For it's love, yes it's love,  
For it's love that's the spirit of this church.  
Not the walls or steeple but a gathered people  
Is what makes up the spirit of this church.

It is not stained glass that makes these windows bright,  
For it's love that's the spirit of this church.  
They're illuminated by compassion's light,  
Yes it's love that's the spirit of this church.

### CHORUS

And our sacred altar is not carved of wood,  
For it's love that's the spirit of this church.  
It is consecrated by the greater good,  
Yes it's love that's the spirit of this church.

### CHORUS

Original lyrics © 1980 by Tony Larsen  
Revised lyrics © 2016 by Elizabeth Alexander and Tony Larsen

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**Composer Note:** It took three ministers plus a minister's daughter to create this song. It all started in 1878, when Presbyterian minister and hymnwriter Elisha A. Hoffman penned the classic altar call warhorse, *Washed in the Blood*. Over a hundred years later, Unitarian Universalist minister Tony Larsen began leading spirited revivals for religious liberals, setting original lyrics to tunes from well-known revival songs.

Tony's new lyric was based on the first line of a church covenant written by Unitarian minister James Vila Blake in 1894: "*Love is the spirit of this church and service is its law. This is our great covenant: to dwell together in peace, to seek the truth in love, and to help one another.*"

Tony's popular revivals were performed all over the country – including in Madison, Wisconsin, where *this* minister's daughter showed up in 1993 with a baby on one hip and a tambourine on the other. Twenty-three years later, a commission for the dedication of a new church building offered her the perfect opportunity to create a revised and full-fledged arrangement of *Love is the Spirit of this Church*.

***Love is the Spirit of this Church* exists in two different versions:**  
**SEA-138-00 - Intergenerational Anthem**  
**SEA-138-02 - Old-time Revival version**

Commissioned by Unitarian Universalist Church of Greater Lansing, L.H. Brown Director of Music  
in celebration of the church's renovated building and enduring mission, with support from the estate of Mary Voelker.

# Love is the Spirit of this Church

SATB, soloist, piano

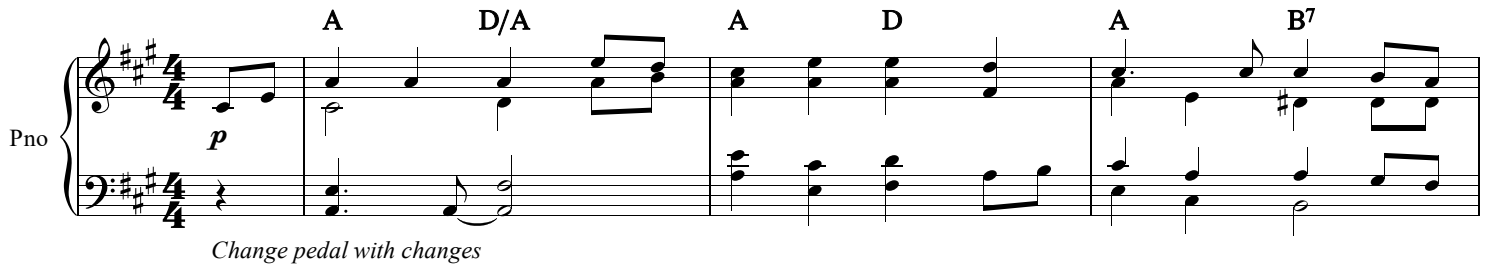
Rev. Tony Larsen &  
Elizabeth Alexander

Elisha A. Hoffman  
Arranged by Elizabeth Alexander

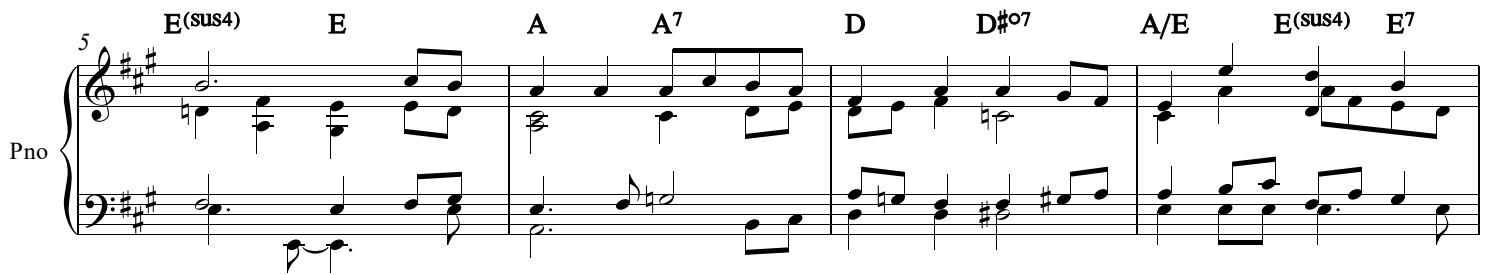
**Beginning Point #1:** Begin here if choir processes. or if minister/speaker has a substantial spoken introduction\*

Thoughtfully, with a very free tempo

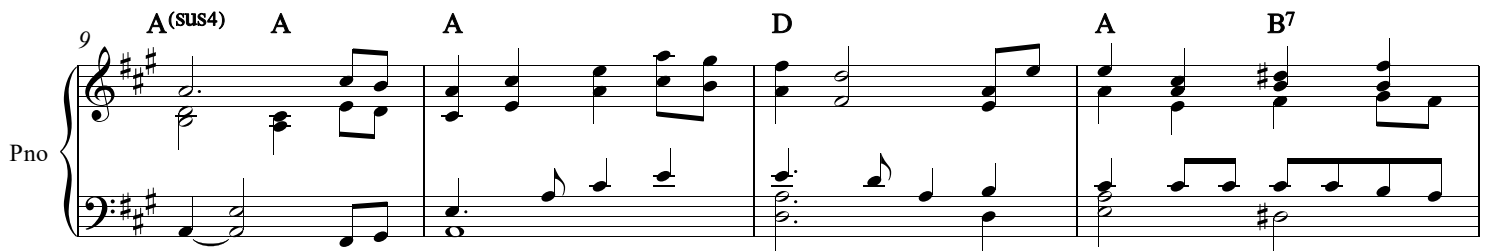
Piano score for measures 1-4. Chords: A, D/A, A, D, A, B7. Dynamics: *p*. Pedal instruction: *Change pedal with changes*.



Piano score for measures 5-8. Chords: E(sus4), E, A, A7, D, D#o7, A/E, E(sus4), E7.



Piano score for measures 9-12. Chords: A(sus4), A, A, D, A, B7.



Piano score for measures 13-16. Chords: Bm/D, E, A7, D, A, E7. Dynamics: *mp*. Pedal instruction: *rit. if desired*.



\* What? There THREE possible Beginning Points? To find out what this is about, see Performance Notes in opening pages of this publication.

Original lyrics © 1980 by Tony Larsen  
Revised lyrics & spoken words © 2016 by Elizabeth Alexander  
Musical arrangement © 2016 by Elizabeth Alexander

**A****Beginning Point #2:** Begin here if minister or speaker has a shorter spoken introduction or brief welcome\*

Thoughtfully and freely, becoming gradually faster until reaching desired tempo for Rehearsal Letter B

Piano accompaniment for measures 17-20. The score shows a piano (Pno) part with a treble and bass clef. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#). The tempo/mood is marked *p*. Above the staff, the chords A and D/A are indicated for each measure. The music features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the bass and chords in the treble.

Piano accompaniment for measures 21-24. The score shows a piano (Pno) part with a treble and bass clef. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#). Above the staff, the chords A and D/A are indicated for each measure. The music continues with a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the bass and chords in the treble.

**Beginning Point #3:** Begin here to launch right into song!\*

25 REPEAT IF DESIRED, AD LIB.

Vocal and piano accompaniment for measures 25-28. The score shows four vocal staves (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and a piano (Pno) part. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#). The tempo/mood is marked *mf*. The vocal parts enter with the lyrics "Oh, my" in measure 25. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the bass and chords in the treble. Above the piano staff, the chords A, D/A, A, D/A, E(sus4), and E7 are indicated for each measure.

**B** (♩ = 104-108) **Forthright**

29

S church is built of nei- ther brick nor stone, For it's love that's the spir- it of this church. It's a

A church is built of nei- ther brick nor stone, For it's love that's the spir- it of this church. It's a

T church is built of nei- ther brick nor stone, For it's love that's the spir- it of this church. It's a

B church is built of nei- ther brick nor stone, For it's love that's the spir- it of this church. It's a

Pno

*mf*

A A B7(add9) E E7

33

S shel- ter fash- ioned from our hearts a- lone, Yes it's love that's the spi- rit of this church. Oh it's

A shel- ter fash- ioned from our hearts a- lone, Yes it's love that's the spi- rit of this church. Oh it's

T shel- ter fash- ioned from our hearts a- lone, Yes it's love that's the spi- rit of this church. Oh it's *mf*

B shel- ter fash- ioned from our hearts a- lone, Yes it's love that's the spi- rit of this church. Oh it's *mf*

Pno

A A7 D D#o7 A/E D/E E7 A

Opal Palmer Adisa, poet • Paul Adams, technological hero • Stephen Alexander, lyric consultant • Ginny Allen, Agile coach and friend • The great people at American Composers Forum • Yehuda Amichai, poet • A. R. Ammons, poet • Jennifer Anderson, conductor and composer advocate • Scott Bates, poet • Abbie Betinis, initiator of collaborative endeavors • Beth Norton, conductor and composer advocate • Dennis Blubaugh, more than just a music dealer • Michael deVernon Boblett, poet • Edna Busby, my first piano teacher • Ray Bradbury, writer • Augustin Cadena, translator • Norbert Capek, minister and advocate for religious freedom • Jessica Corbett, editor • David Cummings, poet • Philip Dacey, poet • Catherine Dalton, composer and serum partner • Emily Dickinson, poet • Evelyn Dudley, poet and caregiver • Rob Eller-Isaacs, minister and composer advocate • Ralph Waldo Emerson, philosopher and poet • Louise Erdrich, writer • David Allan Evans, poet • Sophia Lyon Fahs, writer • Richard M. Fewkes, minister and writer • Pasha Gertler, poet • Jack Gallagher, composer and teacher • Paul Gerike, proofreader • Jocelyn Hagen and Michael Hagan, founders of Graphite Marketplace • Steve Harper, just about everything • Steve Harkins, web designer • Edie Hill, composer and friend • Langston Hughes, poet • Margaret and George Heald, piano technician • Karel Husa, composer and teacher • David Ignatow, poet • Kabir, mystic • Linda Kachelmeier, composer and serum partner • Ruth Palmer, conductor and composer advocate • Joan Wolf Prefontaine, poet • Paul Rardin, conductor and composer advocate • Kalidasa, poet • Steve Kaul, recording engineer • Søren Kierkegaard, philosopher and poet • Dorothy Knost, piano teacher • Ben Krywosz, artistic director of Nautilus Music-Theater • Denise Levertov, poet • George Ella Lyon, poet • Jonathan Machen, vocalist • Dawna Markova, writer • Anne Matlack, conductor and composer advocate • Nancy Menk, composer advocate • Edna St. Vincent Millay, poet • Jane Ramseyer Miller, conductor, composer, social activist • Joe Mish, conductor and composer advocate • J. David Moore, composer • Gerald Rich, poet • Carl Sandburg, poet • friend • King Sigismund III, religious reformer • Ann Silsbee, composer, poet and friend • Simon Alexander-Adams, sounding board, fellow creative, and awesome son • Steven Stucky, composer and teacher • Rabindranath Tagore, poet • Sister Peronne Marie Thibert, teacher and writer • Oliver Alexander-Adams, unconventional thinker and light of my life • Howard Thurman, civil rights leader and writer • Everyone whose work supports the Association for Unitarian Universalist Music Ministries • Charles Varney, high school choral director • Anna Vonhuben, illustrator and graphic designer • Nancy White, poet • John Greenleaf Whittier, poet • Theodore Chickering Williams, poet • Daniel Winter, pianist and teacher • Nancy Wood, poet • Yehudi Wyner, composer and teacher

**A lot of hard work  
and creativity went  
into bringing this  
music to you...**



**...and some of it  
was even mine.**

**This page has been intentionally omitted.  
(You know why.) A complete perusal score may be  
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*Elizabeth Alexander*

*Seafarer Press*

The Music of Elizabeth Alexander

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44

S church. It is *mp*

A church. It is *mp*

T church.

B church.

Pno

A D/A A D/A A D/A A D E

48 **C**

S not stained glass that makes these win - dows bright, For it's love that's the spir - it of this

A not stained glass that makes these win - dows bright, For it's love that's the spir - it

T not stained glass that makes these win - dows bright, For it's love that's the spir - it

B not stained glass that makes these win - dows bright, For it's love that's the spir - it of this

Pno

*mp* A E C#+7 F#m7 A B7 F7(b5)

51

S  
church. They're il - lu - min - a - ted by com - pas - sion's light, Yes it's

A  
of this church. They're il - lu - min - a - ted by com - pas - sion's light, Yes it's

Pno  
church. They're il - lu - min - a - ted by com - pas - sion's light, Yes it's

E<sup>7</sup> A A<sup>7</sup> D Bm<sup>7</sup>

54

S  
love that's the spir - it of this church. For it's love,

A  
love that's the spir - it of this church, A - men! For it's love,

T  
For it's love, yes it's

B  
For it's love, yes it's

Pno  
A/E D/E E<sup>7</sup> A D/A A A D/A A

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63

S church. And our *f*

A church. And our *f*

T church. And our *f*

B church. And our *f*

A D/A A D/A A D/A A D E

Pno

67 **D**

S sa - cred al-tar is not carved of wood, For it's love that's the spir-it of this church, — It is

A sa - cred al-tar is not carved of wood, For it's love that's the spir-it of this church of mine, It is

T sa - cred al-tar is not carved of wood, For it's love that's the spir-it of this church, — It is

B sa - cred al-tar is not carved of wood, For it's love that's the spir-it of this church, — It is

A A B7(add9) E E

Pno

71

S  
con - se - cra - ted by the great - er good, Yes it's love that's the spir - it of this church. For it's

A  
con - se - cra - ted by the great - er good, Yes it's love that's the spir - it of this church. For it's

T  
con - se - cra - ted by the great - er good, Yes it's love that's the spir - it of this church.

B  
con - se - cra - ted by the great - er good, Yes it's love that's the spir - it of this church.

Pno  
A A<sup>7</sup> D D<sup>#07</sup> A/E D/E E A/E

75

S  
love, Yes it's love, For it's love that's the spi - rit of this church,

A  
love, Yes it's love, For it's love that's the spi - rit of this church,

T  
*mf*  
For\_\_ it's love, yes\_\_ it's love, Oh, the spi - rit of this church. Not the

B  
*mf*  
For\_\_ it's love, yes\_\_ it's love, Oh, the spi - rit of this church. Not the

Pno  
A D/A A D G<sup>7</sup>/D D A B(sus4) B/D# E

79 *mp* Start gettin' your joy on!

S Oh, \_\_\_\_\_ Oh, \_\_\_\_\_ Oh, \_\_\_\_\_ *port.*

A *mp* Start gettin' your joy on!

A Oh, \_\_\_\_\_ Oh, \_\_\_\_\_ Oh, \_\_\_\_\_

T walls or stee - ple but a gath - ered peo - ple is what makes up the spi - rit of this

B walls or stee - ple but a gath - ered peo - ple is what makes up the spi - rit of this

Pno **A A<sup>7</sup> D D<sup>#07</sup> A/E D/E E**

82 *mf*

S That's the spir - it! Love is the spir - it! That's the spir - it! Love is the spir - it!

A *mf*

A That's the spir - it! Love is the spir - it! That's the spir - it! Love is the spir - it!

T *first time only* church. *mf* That's the spir - it! Love is the spir - it!

B *first time only* church. *mf* That's the spir - it! Love is the spir - it!

Pno **A D<sup>7</sup> A D<sup>7</sup>**

**Testimony Time! How is love embodied in your church?**

Testimonies are freely-offered public professions of personal experience and insight which may take many forms. Here they are “mini-testimonies,” short statements about love in your religious community. They may be carefully planned ahead of time or solicited from attendees at your event or worship service. Use a microphone if desired.

**E**

**REPEAT AD LIB.**

*After several repetitions, add descant notes. If the spirit moves individual singers to jump to a higher voice part, do it!*

86

S  
That's the spir - it! Love is the spir - it!

A  
That's the spir - it! Love is the spir - it!

T  
That's the spir - it! Love is the spir - it!

B  
That's the spir - it! Love is the spir - it!

Pno  
A D7

*Individuals speak their testimonies here. For example:*

88

Voices

1. Preaching the gospel of religious tolerance!
2. Ending homelessness in this city!
3. Giving all children a good education!
4. Opening the doors of this church to strangers!
5. Making our streets safe for people of all races and religions!
6. Responding to the refugee crisis!
7. Reforming our criminal justice system!

Pno  
A D7

Invite the "Gathered People" to sing along!

90

S  
That's the spir - it! Love is the spir - it! Oh, \_\_\_\_\_

A  
That's the spir - it! Love is the spir - it! Oh, \_\_\_\_\_ Oh it's...

T  
That's the spir - it! Love is the spir - it! Oh, \_\_\_\_\_ opt.

B  
That's the spir - it! Love is the spir - it! Oh, \_\_\_\_\_ opt.

Gathered People  
Oh it's

Pno  
A D7 E(sus4) E

**F**

Solo or Tutti, with remaining sopranos singing with altos

94

S Oh\_\_ it's love, Oh\_\_ it's love, Oh, \_\_\_\_\_ Ha - le - lu - jah!

A Oh\_\_ it's love, Oh\_\_ it's love, That's the spir - it of this church.

T Oh\_\_ it's love, Oh\_\_ it's love, That's the spir - it of \_\_ this church.

B Oh\_\_ it's love, Oh\_\_ it's love, That's the spir - it of \_\_ this church.

Gathered People love, yes it's love, For it's love that's the spir - it of this church, Not the

Pno

A D/A A D G7/D D A B7(add9) E E7

98

Tutti:

S Oh, \_\_\_\_\_ Oh, \_\_\_\_\_ Oh, \_\_\_\_\_ *port.*

A Oh, \_\_\_\_\_ Oh, \_\_\_\_\_ Oh, \_\_\_\_\_

T Oh, \_\_\_\_\_ Oh, \_\_\_\_\_ Oh, \_\_\_\_\_

B Oh, \_\_\_\_\_ Oh, \_\_\_\_\_ Oh, \_\_\_\_\_

Gathered People walls or stee - ple but a gath - ered peo - ple is what makes up the spi - rit of this

Pno

A A7 D D#07 A/E D/E E

101 SING THREE TIMES

S  
A  
T  
B

That's\_ the spir - it!\_ Love is the spir - it! That's\_ the spir - it!

That's\_ the spir - it!\_ Love is the spir - it! That's\_ the spir - it!

That's\_ the spir - it!\_ Love is the spir - it! That's\_ the spir - it!

That's\_ the spir - it!\_ Love is the spir - it! That's\_ the spir - it!

Gathered People

*\* first time only*

church.

Pno

A D7 A/C# D

*Feeling stressed about holding this last note for nearly four measures?  
No worries! Just omit a couple of 'em. :-)*

104

S  
A  
T  
B

of this\_ church!

of this\_ church!

of this\_ church!

of\_ this\_ church!

Pno

A/E D/E A D A D A D A