

No Other People's Children

1-4 part choir, soloists and piano
(flexible voicing)

Optional descant and
audience/congregation part



Elizabeth Alexander

Seafarer Press

No Other People's Children

Words and Music by Elizabeth Alexander

How did we get to this place
Where we could look at each other's face
And see anything but beauty and understanding?
I want to know who you are,
And face the suffering that keeps us far apart
I can never truly see the world through your eyes
Or take away your pain,
But I'm listening, and I'm hoping you can hear me saying:

*You are my neighbor. You are beloved. You are worth seeing for who you are.
You are my neighbor. You are beloved. You are worth seeing for who you are.
I'm here, I'm listening, I'm here listening with you:*

Break bread with me.
Make peace with me.
Speak the truth with me.
Begin again with me.
Relate with me.
Create with me.
Be the change with me
That keeps our children safe and free:
There are no other people's heartaches.
There are no other people's injuries.
There are no other people's children in this world.

See what is unseen, Say what is unspoken,
Believe that there's no wall between our beating hearts.

*You are my neighbor. You are beloved. You are worth seeing for who you are.
You are my neighbor. You are beloved. You are worth seeing for who you are.
I'm here, I'm listening, I'm here listening with you:*

Hold hands with me.
Forgive with me.
Make mistakes with me,
And take a chance with me.
Be whole with me.
Be real with me.
Start to heal with me
So we can live courageously.
There are no other people's heartaches.
There are no other people's injuries.
There are no other people's children in this world.

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**The duration of this song may range between 4 and 7 minutes, depending on
1) whether performers decide to take the repeat and
2) whether performers choose to sing the "Standard ending" or the "Alternate ending."**

No Other People's Children

1-4 part choir, soloists & piano, with optional descant and audience/congregation part

(♩ = 92-104) Gently, directly, intimately

Words and Music by Elizabeth Alexander

The musical score is written in G major and 4/4 time. It begins with a piano introduction marked *mp*. The first system (measures 1-5) features a piano accompaniment with chords D and Bm. The second system (measures 6-10) includes chords D/A, Bm7, D/G, A/G, G, A/G, and G. The third system (measures 10-12) is a solo section for the voice, with piano accompaniment chords D, Bm7, and G. The lyrics for this section are: "How did we get to this place where we could look at each other's face and see an -". The fourth system (measures 13-18) continues the solo section with piano accompaniment chords A, Bm7, F#m7, G9, A, and F#7/A#. The lyrics for this section are: "- y - thing but beau - ty and un - der - stand - ing?".

No Other People's Children was commissioned by Unity Church-Unitarian in loving gratitude to Rob and Janne Eller-Isaacs for their inspirational ministry to this congregation, the St. Paul community, and the Unitarian Universalist Association.

18

Solos

I want to know who you are and face the suf-f'ring that keeps us far a-part.

Bm7 D/A Gmaj7(add9) G

Ped. Ped. Ped.

21

Solos

mp

I can nev-er tru-ly see the world through your eyes, or take a-way your pain,

A7(sus4) Bm7 D/A G D/F#

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

25

Solos

rit.

but I'm lis-ten-ing, and I'm hop-ing you can hear me say-ing:

Em7 G/A D/A A7 D/A A7

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

1-part choir: All parts sing melody (i.e. soprano line) in unison/octaves.

2, 3 or 4-part choir: All parts begin in unison/octaves, adding lower parts and descant as desired.

This song works with or without any of the harmony parts!

A **a tempo**
mp

30

S
A
T
B

You are my neigh - bor, you are be - lov - ed, you are worth see - ing for who — you are. —

mp

D Bm G G/A A(sus4)

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

34

S
A
T
B

You are my neigh - bor, you are be - lov - ed, you are worth see - ing for who — you — are.

D Bm G G/A A

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

38

S
A
T
B

I'm here, I'm lis - ten - ing, I'm here lis - ten - ing with you: 1. Break 2. Hold

p *mp*

Oh, ——— I'm here lis - ten - ing with you: 1. Break 2. Hold

G⁹ D^{maj7}/A G⁹/B G/A

gently

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

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.**

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55

S
A

keeps our chil - dren safe and_ free: There are no oth - er peo - ple's heart-aches,
we can live cou - ra - geous - ly. There are no oth - er peo - ple's heart-aches,

T
B

keeps our chil - dren safe and_ free: There are no oth - er peo - ple's heart-aches,
we can live cou - ra - geous - ly. There are no oth - er peo - ple's heart-aches,

G/A A G Em A(sus4) A

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

60

S
A

There are no oth - er peo - ple's in - jur - ies, — There are no oth - er peo - ple's
There are no oth - er peo - ple's in - jur - ies, — There are no oth - er peo - ple's

T
B

There are no oth - er peo - ple's in - jur - ies, — There are no oth - er peo - ple's
There are no oth - er peo - ple's in - jur - ies, — There are no oth - er peo - ple's

G Em A(sus4) A G Em

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

This repeat is optional. (Later in this song, there is another chance to sing Verse 2!)

63

S
A

1.
chil - dren in this world.
chil - dren in this

T
B

chil - dren in this world,
chil - dren in this

A G A(sus4)

Ped. Ped. Ped.

B

2.

68 *mf* See what is un - seen, Be-
mf Say what is un - spo - ken,
 world. Oh
 world, Oh,
 G/A D⁹/F#
 Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

72 *freely, ad lib.:*
mp - lieve that there's no wall be - tween our beat - ing hearts. Say it with me:
 Oh
 Oh
 Em⁷ D/F# G⁹ G/A l.h.
 Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

The audience/congregation may be invited to sing along at Letter C.
 (See inside back page for an Audience/Congregation Part for the Standard Ending.)

If at all possible, sing from memory so you can make eye contact with others.
 Perhaps the conductor would like to sing with the choir as well.

C a tempo

77 *mp*

S
A
T
B

You are my neigh-bor, you are be-lov-ed, you are worth see-ing for who__ you are._

mp

D Bm G G/A A(sus4)

mp

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

81

S
A
T
B

You are my neigh- bor, you are be- lov - ed, you are worth see - ing for who__ you__ are.

mf

D Bm G G/A A

mf

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

If you skipped the repeat AND you are performing standard ending,
you'll want to sing Verse 2 at this time.
Otherwise, sing Verse 1.

85 *With reverence:mp*

S A I'm here, I'm lis-ten-ing, I'm here lis-ten-ing with you: 1. Break
2. Hold

T B * Oh, _____ I'm here lis-ten-ing with you: 1. Break
2. Hold

p *mp* *With reverence:mp*

G⁹ D^{maj7/A} G^{9/B} G/A *very gently*

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

D 89 *mp* Some or all sopranos may sing the descant:

Descant You are my neigh - bor, _____ You are be - lov - ed, _____
You are my neigh - bor, _____ You are be - lov - ed, _____

S A bread with me. _____ Make peace with me. _____ Speak the
hands with me. _____ For - give with me. _____ Make mis -

T B bread with me. _____ Make peace with me. _____ Speak the
hands with me. _____ For - give with me. _____ Make mis -

D Bm *mp*

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

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STANDARD ENDING:
Recommended when teaching this song to an audience or congregation

101

Descant

Oh, keep our chil - dren safe and free:
 Oh, we can live cou - ra - geous - ly.)

S
A
change with me that keeps our chil - dren safe and free:
 heal with me so we can live cou - ra - geous - ly.

T
B
change with me that keeps our chil - dren safe and free:
 heal with me so we can live cou - ra - geous - ly.

G G/A A

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

105

Descant

There are no oth - er peo - ple's heart - aches, There are no oth - er peo - ple's

S
A
There are no oth - er peo - ple's heart - aches, There are no oth - er peo - ple's
 (heart - aches,)

T
B
There are no oth - er peo - ple's heart - aches, There are no oth - er peo - ple's

G Em A(sus4) A G Em

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

108

Descant

S
A

T
B

in - jur - ies, — There are no oth - er peo - ple's chil - dren in this

A (sus4) A G Em A

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

poco rit.

111

Descant

S
A

T
B

world. —

world. —

world. —

G/A

Ped. p

ALTERNATE ENDING:

**Recommended when audience/congregation will not be joining in the singing,
or at gatherings where most people are already familiar with this song**

117

Descant

Oh, keep our chil - dren safe and _____ free:

S
A
change with me _____ that keeps our chil - dren safe and _____ free: 2. Hold *f*

T
B
change with me _____ that keeps our chil - dren safe and free: 2. Hold *f*
(safe and free:)

G G/A A

Ped. *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.*

E

121

Descant

You are my neigh - bor, _____ You are be - lov - ed, _____

S
A
hands with me. _____ Make peace with me. _____ Speak the

T
B
hands with me. _____ Make peace with me. _____ Speak the

F Dm

f

Ped. *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.*

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133

Descant

Oh, we can live cou - ra - geous - ly:
(cou - ra - geous - ly:)

S
A
heal with me so we can live cou - ra - geous - ly:
(cou - ra - geous - ly:)

T
B
heal with me so we can live cou - ra - geous - ly:

Db Db/Eb Eb

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

137

Descant

There are no oth - er peo - ple's heart - aches, There are no oth - er peo - ple's
(heart - aches,)

S
A
There are no oth - er peo - ple's heart - aches, There are no oth - er peo - ple's
(heart - aches,)

T
B
There are no oth - er peo - ple's heart - aches, There are no oth - er peo - ple's

Db Bbm Eb(sus4) Eb Db Bbm

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

140

Descant

S
A

T
B

in - jur - ies, — There are no oth - er peo - ple's chil - dren in this

in - jur - ies, — There are no oth - er peo - ple's chil - dren in this

in - jur - ies, — There are no oth - er peo - ple's chil - dren in this

E_b(sus4) *E_b* *D_b* *B_bm* *E_b*

Ped. *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.*

143

Descant

S
A

T
B

world. —

world. —

world. —

D_b/E_b

p

Ped. *Ped.*

No Other People's Children

(♩ = 92-104) Gently, directly, intimately

Words and Music by Elizabeth Alexander

You are my neigh - bor, you are be - lov - ed, you are worth see - ing for who__ you are.__
 You are my neigh - bor, you are be - lov - ed, you are worth see - ing for who__ you__ are.
 I'm here, I'm lis - ten - ing, I'm here lis - ten - ing with you: 1. Break
2. Hold
 bread with me.____ Make peace with me.____ Speak the
 hands with me.____ For - give with me.____ Make mis -
 truth with me.____ Be - gin a - gain__ with me.____ Re -
 takes with me,____ And take a chance with me.____ Be
 late with me.____ Cre - ate with me.____ Be the
 whole with me.____ Be real with me.____ Start to
 change with me__ that keeps our chil - dren safe and__ free:
 heal with me__ so we can live cou - ra - geous - ly.
 There are no oth - er peo ple's heart - aches, There are no oth - er peo ple's in - jur - ies,____
 There are no oth - er peo - ple's chil - dren in this world.____

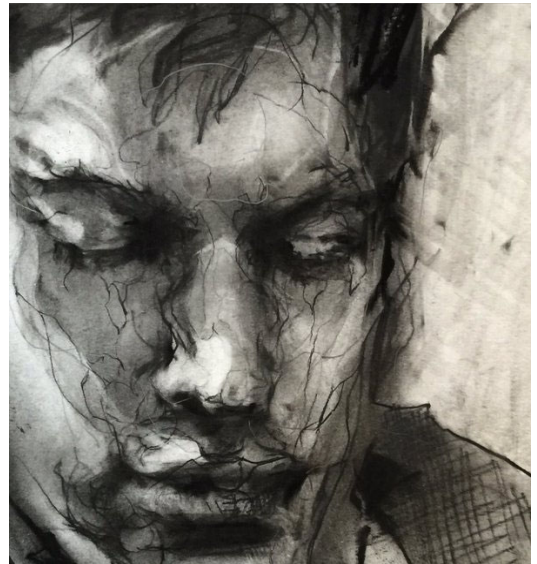
Composer Note:

One exciting aspect of this commission was getting to weave themes from my own church's mission, ministry and outreach right into the lyrics. This process reminded me how lucky I am to hear the language of love, struggle and change on a regular basis from the pulpit, at church meetings and in fellowship gatherings.

In some cases, a familiar phrase written by our ministers Rev. Rob and Janne Eller-Isaacs became the seed for a lyric. For example, Rob's ritual "A Litany of Atonement," which the congregation participates in each year at Yom Kippur, contains this refrain: "I forgive myself. I forgive you. We begin again in love."

In crafting other lyrics, I distilled complex ideas into a few carefully chosen words. One example of this, "You are my neighbor. You are beloved...", reflects our congregation's core commitment to making the Beloved Community a reality in our time.

As I composed this piece, it was impossible not to be inspired by my church's partnership with Above Every Name, the predominantly African-American congregation that shares both our sanctuary and our vision of a more just and inclusive world. That is why, when I was told I could compose this piece for any one of my church's four choirs, I chose *all* of the choirs and the congregation as well, giving everyone the chance to express the sacrament of bridge building in song.



Cover art by
Agnes Grochulska
www.agnesgrochulska.com

Selected Choral Music by Elizabeth Alexander

A Palette To Paint Us As We Are (Gerald Rich)
SATB, piano • SEA-014-01
SSA, piano • SEA-014-02

Beware the Winter Settin' In (Alexander)
SATB, Celtic band, opt. children's choir • SEA-139-00

Blessed Be the Flower That Triumphs (Boblett)
SATB • SEA-078-00

Cherish Your Doubt (Alexander)
SATB, piano • SEA-063-01
SSAA, piano • SEA-063-02

Die Gedanken Sind Frei (German protest song, arr.)
SATB, piano • SEA-087-00

Do Not Leave Your Cares at the Door (Norman Naylor)
SATB • SEA-071-00

Even a Fist Was Once an Open Palm (Yehuda Amichai)
SATB • SEA-026-01

Faith Is the bird that feels the light (Tagore)
SSA • SEA-068-00

Fighting Over What We Believe (Alexander)
SATB, soloists, piano • SEA-099-01

Finally On My Way To Yes (Pesha Gertler)
SSATB, piano • SEA-019-00

Folks, I'm Telling You (Langston Hughes)
SSATB, piano • SEA-027-00

Glen Song (Scott Bates)
SSATB, piano • SEA-025-00

Handles (Alexander)
SSA, piano • SEA-148-00

How To Sing Like a Planet (Alexander)
SATB, piano • SEA-105-01

If You Can Walk You Can Dance (Zimbabwean Proverb)
SAB, piano, claves • SEA-022-03
TBB, piano, claves • SEA-022-05
SSA, piano, claves • SEA-022-06
SATB, piano, claves • SEA-022-07

Immortal Love (John Greenleaf Whittier)
SATB • SEA-017-00

Infant Holy, Infant Lowly (Polish carol, arr.)
SSA • SEA-020-00

Jump! (Ray Bradbury)
SSA, string quartet • SEA-090-00

Kindling (Alexander)
SATB, chamber ensemble • SEA-123-00
SATB, piano • SEA-123-09

Let it Matter (Alexander)
SSA, piano • SEA-125-03
SATB, piano • SEA-125-04

No Other People's Children (Alexander)
1-4 part choir, soloist, piano • SEA-141-03

...or a musician (Philip Dacey)
SATB, orchestra • SEA-007-00

A Palette To Paint Us As We Are (Gerald Rich)
SA, piano • SEA-014-00
SATB, piano • SEA-014-01

Praise Wet Snow Falling Early (Denise Levertov)
SATB, piano • SEA-015-00

Reasons for the Perpetuation of Slavery (Alexander)
SSAA • SEA-091-00

Same Birds (David Allen Evans)
SATB • SEA-128-00

Song of Kabir (Kabir)
SATB • SEA-119-00

The Gate is Open (Sister Peronne Marie Thibert)
SATB • SEA-097-01

They Have Freckles Everywhere (Alexander)
SSAA, piano • SEA-076-00

To Make a Prairie (Emily Dickinson)
SSA, piano • SEA-016-00

We Lift Up Our Hearts (Richard Fewkes)
Unison children's choir, SATB, piano • SEA-021-00

We Remember Them (Sylvan Kamens, Jack Riemer)
SATB, piano • SEA-083-01

Where there Is Light in the Soul (Chinese proverb)
SAB • SEA-070-00
SATB • SEA-070-01
SSA • SEA-070-02
TBB • SEA-062-03

When the Song of the Angels Is Stilled (Thurman)
SATB • SEA-062-00
TTBB • SEA-062-02
SSAA • SEA-062-04
SATB, flute • SEA-062-05

Why I Pity the Woman Who Never Spills (Prefontaine)
SSAA • SEA-058-00