

Fighting Over What We Believe

SATB, soloists and piano



Elizabeth Alexander

Seafarer Press

Fighting Over What We Believe

*Talking left, talking right, talking far into the night,
Splitting hairs, splitting up, splitting off,
Less and more, rich and poor, what to address, what to ignore,
What are we really fighting for?*

*Persuade, coerce, convene, disperse, accept or curse?
Deny, confess, condemn or bless?
Who lives? Who dies?
My truth! Your lies!*

*Bring in, shut out, what's that all about?
Who gives out retribution and grace?
What to keep, what to spend,
What to give and what to lend?
Some have not, some have a lot.
Can we learn to share the things we've got?*

I see us fighting over what we believe; how to love and how to pray.
We begin with hope and resolve and dreams, and end up fighting over what we believe.
I see us fighting over what we believe, leaving spirits poor and lonely.
I want to use my fighting spirit in a different way instead of fighting over what we believe.

I want to wrestle with the angel 'til the light of dawn,
And struggle with my need for pride.
I want to take on my tendency to turn my head,
And grapple with why it feels so hard to gently lay our differences aside.

We all believe in justice. Let's talk about what that looks like.
And we believe in compassion. Let's look at what that really means.
We believe in the holy work of listening, to every voice.
Let's start our conversation there,

Instead of fighting over what we believe; it wears us down and wears us out.
We have eyes to see, we have ears to hear, we have hands that long to give and receive.
I see us fighting over what we believe, leaving spirits poor and lonely.
I want to use my fighting spirit in a different way instead of fighting over what we believe.

(Divide, unite, exclude, invite, day, night, wrong, right, no end in sight...)

We all believe in justice...
...Let's talk about what that looks like.

Lyric copyright 2012 by composer Elizabeth Alexander



Fighting Over What We Believe combines American folk music, a touch of hip-hop cadence, and a warm choral sound. The result is a dynamic dialogue of protest and affirmation which acknowledges that the path to conversation is no easy road.

Elizabeth Alexander's music has been performed by nearly 2000 choirs worldwide. More information about her music, awards, commissions and recordings is available at www.elizabethalexander.com.

Commissioned by Mayflower Community Congregational Church (UCC),

Fighting Over What We Believe

SATB, soloists and piano

(♩ = 138-142)

Elizabeth Alexander

The musical score is written in 4/4 time. It features five vocal staves: Solos, Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The piano part is at the bottom, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, with pedal markings (*Ped.*) under the first two notes of each measure. The vocal staves are currently empty, indicating that the solo parts are to be distributed among the performers.

* The distribution of the solos is intentionally flexible, so that ensembles may adapt this song to suit their performance circumstances. Most ensembles will wish to have 2-4 soloists, but some may wish to assign each solo line to a different singer, resulting in up to 20 soloists.

6

Solos

Solo 1

p

Talk-ing left, talk-ing right, talk-ing

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

10

Solos

far in - to the night, split - ting hairs, split - ting up, split - ting off.

Ped. Ped.

13

Solos

Solo 2

p

Less and more, rich and poor, what to ad -

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

16

Solos

dress, what to ig - nore, _____ What are we real - ly fight - ing for?

Ped. Ped.

19

Solos

Solo 3 *mp* Solo 4 *mp* Solo 5

Con - vene, dis - perse, Per - suade, co - erce, Ac - cept or

mp Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

22

Solos

Solo 6 Solo 7

De - ny, con - fess, curse? Con - demn or bless,

1 5 4 2 Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

25

Solo 8

mf

Solos

Who lives, who dies,

Solo 9

mf

My truth! Your lies!

mf

*

Ped.

*

Ped.

*

Ped.

*

Ped.

Solo 10

mf

29

Solos

Bring in, shut out, what's that all a-bout?

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

33

Solo 12

mf

Solos

What to keep, what to spend, what to give and what to lend,

Solo 11

mf

Who gives out re-tri - bu-tion and grace?

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

37 *f*

S Some have not, Some have a lot, Can we learn to share the

A Some have not, Some have a lot, Can we learn to share the

T Some have not, Some have a lot, Can we learn to share the

B Some have not, Some have a lot, Can we learn to share the

* Ped. * Ped. Ped. Ped.

40 Solo 13 OR Tutti *mp*

Solos I see us

S things we've got?

A things we've got?

T things we've got?

B things we've got?

Ped.

A

44

Solos

fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, — how to love and how — to pray, —

mp

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

47

Solos

Solo 14 OR Tutti

mp

We be - gin — with hope — and re - solve — and dreams, — and end up

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

50

Solos

fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, —

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

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...AND SOME OF IT WAS EVEN MINE.

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S
diff - rent way in - stead of fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, —

A
diff - rent way in - stead of fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, —

T
diff - rent way in - stead of fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, —

B
diff - rent way in - stead of fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, —

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

S
mp warmly
I want to

A
mp warmly
I want to

mp

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

B

64

S wres - tle with the an - gel 'til the light of dawn, and strug - gle with my need for

A wres - tle with the an - gel 'til the light of dawn, and strug - gle with my need for

mp

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

67

S pride.

A pride.

T *mp warmly* I want to take on my ten - den - cy to turn my head, and *p subito*

B *mp warmly* I want to take on my ten - den - cy to turn my head, and *p subito*

Ped. Ped. Ped.

70

T
B

grap - ple with why it feels so hard to gent - ly lay our diff - 'ren - ces a -

grap - ple with why it feels so hard to gent - ly lay our diff - 'ren - ces a -

p subito

Ped. Ped.

74

Solos

S
A
T
B

mf
Day, night, wrong, right, no end in sight.

mf
Day, night, wrong, right, no end in sight.

mp A - side, *mf* We all be - lieve in

p A - side, *mf* We all be - lieve in

side, a - side. *mf* We all be - lieve in

side, a - side, a - side. *mf* We all be - lieve in

mf

Ped. Ped. Ped. *

78 **C** Solo 16 *mf*

Solos

Let's talk a - bout what that looks like, *

S
jus - tice, And we be -

A
jus - tice, And we be -

T
jus - tice, And we be -

B
jus - tice, And we be -

mf

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

* Yes, the notes in m.80 are different than those in mm.142-143. This is not a typo! This phrase is faster, with a little *attitude*.

Solos

Solo 17

mf

Let's look at what that real - ly means,

S lieve in com - pas - sion.

A lieve in com - pas - sion.

T lieve in com - pas - sion.

B lieve in com - pas - sion.

Ped.

Ped.

*

Ped.

Ped.

p warmly

S We be - lieve in the ho - ly work of lis - ten - ing _____ to

p warmly

A We be - lieve in the ho - ly work of lis - ten - ing _____ to

p warmly

T We be - lieve in the ho - ly work of lis - ten - ing to

p warmly

B We be - lieve in the ho - ly work of lis - ten - ing to

p subito

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

Solo 18

mp

90

Solos

S

A

T

B

ev' - ry, ev' - ry voice.

ev' - ry, ev' - ry voice.

ev' - ry, ev' - ry voice.

ev' - ry, ev' - ry voice. Let's start

Ped.

94

S

A

T

B

Let's start

Let's start there,

Let's start there, let's start

Let's start there, let's start

there, let's start

Ped.

98

Solo 19* *mf* Solo 21* *f*

Bring in, shut out, what's that all a - bout? What to

Solos

Solo 20* *mf* Solo 21* *f*

Who gives out re - tri - bu - tion and grace? What to

S

there, _____ let's start there, _____ let's start

A

there, let's start there, _____ let's start there, let's start

T

there, _____ let's start there, _____ let's start

B

there, _____ let's start there, _____ let's start

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

* If desired, some choir members may be asked to join the soloists in measures 98-105.

102

Solos

keep, what to spend, what to give and what to lend, Who's my neigh - bor, who's___ my friend?

keep, what to spend, what to give and what to lend, Who's my neigh - bor, who's___ my friend?

S

there,_____ let's start there, let's start there,

A

there,_____ let's start there, let's start there,

T

there,_____ let's start there, let's start there,

B

there,_____ let's start there, start there,

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

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113

S We have eyes___ to see,___ we have ears___ to hear,___ we have hands

A We have eyes___ to see,___ we have ears___ to hear,___ we have hands

T We have eyes___ to see,___ we have ears___ to hear,___ we have hands

B We have eyes___ to see,___ we have ears___ to hear,___ we have hands

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

116

S ___ that long to give and re - ceive,___ I see us

A ___ that long to give and re - ceive,___ I see us

T ___ that long to give and re - ceive,___ I see us

B ___ that long to give and re - ceive,___ I see us

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

119

S
fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, — leav - ing spi - rits poor — and lone -

A
fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, — leav - ing spi - rits poor — and lone -

T
fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, — leav - ing spi - rits poor — and lone -

B
fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, — leav - ing spi - rits poor — and lone -

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

122

S
ly, I want to use my fight - ing spi - rit in a diff' - rent way — in - stead of

A
ly, I want to use my fight - ing spi - rit in a diff' - rent way — in - stead of

T
ly, I want to use my fight - ing spi - rit in a diff' - rent way — in - stead of

B
ly, I want to use my fight - ing spi - rit in a diff' - rent way — in - stead of

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

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131

mf

S Noth - in' good can come from fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve,

mp

A fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve,

T fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve,

mp

B fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve,

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

134

mf marcato

S Di - vide, u - nite, ex - clude, in - vite, day, night, wrong,

A fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, o - ver what we be - lieve,

mf marcato

T Di - vide, u - nite, ex - clude, in - vite, day, night, wrong,

B fight - ing o - ver what we be - lieve, o - ver what we be - lieve,

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

137

S
right, no end in sight. We all be - lieve in jus - tice,

A
— o - ver what we be - lieve, — We all be - lieve in jus - tice,

T
right, no end in sight. We all be - lieve in jus - tice,

B
— o - ver what we be - lieve, — We all be - lieve in jus - tice,

Ped. Ped. * Ped. Ped.

140

meno mosso

All
Let's talk a - bout what that looks like.*

pp *lunga*

p *lunga*

Ped. Ped.

Despite the *ritardando*, the *meno mosso* and the *pianissimo*, the last vocal note should not be held beyond its written value.
The final vocal line is determined and unsentimental, and its cut off is clean and strong!

* Nancy Grundahl, who conducted the premiere, asked the singers to slowly close their music folders and hold them by their side during measures 140-141, looking straight at the audience while they sang the last two measures of the song. It made the ending of this piece very powerful. Choirs planning to perform this song using music might consider this or another dramatic effect.

Selected Choral Music by Elizabeth Alexander

April Rain Song (Langston Hughes) SATB	SEA-006-01
Before the Bread (English folk prayer) SSSS	SEA-023-00
Blessed Be the Flower That Triumphs (Michael deVernon Boblett) SATB	SEA-078-00
Cherish Your Doubt (Alexander) SATB & piano / SSAA & piano	SEA-063-01 / SEA-063-02
Climb (Edna St. Vincent Millay) SATB & piano	SEA-059-00
Dragon Dance (Elizabeth Alexander) S & piano	SEA-001-00
Die Gedanken Sind Frei (15 th century German protest song, arr.) SATB & piano	SEA-087-00
The Earth Called To My Friend (Nancy Wood) SSA & piano	SEA-057-00
Even a Fist Was Once an Open Palm (Yehuda Amichai) SATB	SEA-026-01
Faith Is the Bird That Feels the Light (Rabindranath Tagore) SSA	SEA-068-00
Fighting Over What We Believe (Alexander) SAB youth choir, SATB & piano	SEA-099-00
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
For So the Children Come (Sophia Fahs) SATB & piano	SEA-010-00
Glen Song (Scott Bates) SSATB & piano	SEA-025-00
Go Out! (John Murray) SATB & piano	SEA-081-00
I Write This Poem Out of Darkness (George Ella Lyon) SSA, flute, violin & piano	SEA-024-00
If You Can Walk You Can Dance (Zimbabwean Proverb) SAB & piano / TTB & piano	SEA-022-03 / SEA-022-05
Immortal Love (John Greenleaf Whittier) SATB	SEA-017-00
Infant Holy, Infant Lowly (arr. Polish carol) SSA	SEA-020-00
The Journey (Evelyn Dudley) TTBB / SATB	SEA-075-00 / SEA-075-01
Jump! (Ray Bradbury) SSA & string quartet	SEA-090-00
Life is not a Garden (Alexander) SATB & piano	SEA-064-00
May This Be a Working Alleluia (Alexander) S children's choir, SATB & piano (opt. flute & 2 trumpets) ..	SEA-098-00
Morning Bread (Amy Lowell) SATB	SEA-060-00
...or a musician (Philip Dacey) SATB & orchestra	SEA-007-00
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