

**Title:** Is God Necessary?

**Date:** November 9, 2008

**Speaker:** Rabbi Bernard Baskin

**Service Leaders:** Catherine Silverglen and Lyla Miklos

**Music Ministers:** The Choir, led by Cindy Carey

### 1. Bell:

(Catherine will ring the bell in the lobby.)

**LYLA:** We kindly ask you to quietly take your seats as we listen to our Choir's Prelude "Hashivenu".

### 2. Prelude:

**Hashivenu**

**The Choir, Led by Cindy Carey**

### 3. Welcome:

**CATHERINE:** Good Morning!

My name is Catherine Silverglen and I will be one of your service leaders this morning along with Lyla Miklos and we would like to welcome everyone to The First Unitarian Church of Hamilton on this glorious Sunday morning in a gloriously historic week.

The election of Barack Obama will surely not have escaped the notice of those gathered here this morning many of whom will celebrate this as a long time coming. Those who remember a time when Black people weren't even allowed to vote never mind be elected to the presidency and those of us who have been working in anti-oppression work of all types will surely be offering prayers and exclamations of thanks this morning. I hope that some of you were able to share the sheer elation that Kira, my daughter, and I experienced in celebrating Obama's victory with women and men from all parts of the world many of whom thought they would never live to see this day. Their tears of joy, shouts of gratitude, and sheer disbelief will be forever etched in our memories. I hope you will find it fitting that we might also offer our prayers up and our best wishes to the Obama Family this morning that whatever divine powers we may believe may manifest in this world that they will bestow upon the family security, strength and wisdom as they travel their historic journey and that we might also be inspired, each of us, with the determination to be the change we seek. Yes we can!

Our speaker today is also someone that has inspired many of us for many years in this community. Bernard Baskin, the Rabbi Emeritus of Temple Anshe Sholom, the oldest Jewish Reform Congregation in Canada. Rabbi Baskin has honoured our congregation with his wisdom in the past by serving us from the pulpit when we have

been in between ministers. He was also a welcome presence at our Church's dedication ceremony when we officially made Dundurn Street our new home. We are thrilled to not only have a celebrated spiritual leader, but more importantly a friend back in our home once again. Baskin's tremendous legacy was honoured this spring with a gala banquet marking the 60th anniversary of his ordination and the unveiling of a special collection of his columns written over the last half century for The Hamilton Spectator.

We are blessed in this congregation with wonderful music and today is no exception. Our Music Ministry today will be provided by Pat Keefe, Eleanor Wrigley, Rachel Derry and our Choir led by Cindy Carey.

If you are moved by something you hear during this service please show your appreciation in a manner that is respectful but honest and true to you.

We kindly ask for formal silence during our Meditation in Words, Silence and Music. This significant part of our service is for quiet inward reflection.

If you have a Joy or a Sorrow you would like shared with the congregation during today's service please make sure to write it the grey binder, before our Musical Meditation ends if you haven't done so already. It can be found at the small table against the wall to my right.

This service is also piped into the lobby where there are comfortable chairs for you, your children or guests if you have to step out of the sanctuary to feel more comfortable, but would still like to hear the service.

Whoever you are, whomever you love, wherever you are in your search for meaning, today you are the people of this congregation, and you are welcome in this house of worship.

(Catherine will move to the mike and music stand on stage left in front of the piano.)

#### **4. Chalice Lighting/Invocation – Reading #444 “This House”**

**LYLA:** The flaming chalice is one of the most recognizable symbols of our Unitarian Universalist faith. At the beginning of every service, we light our chalice to mark our entry into sacred space and to affirm our participation together in the worship activities of this liberal religious community.

As we light our Chalice let us mark an important date in our calendars this week. November 11th is Remembrance Day and I would like to thank Mary Anne Forbes for her beautiful poppy display she brought for today's service.

Traditionally this is a time for Canadians to honour and remember those who have sacrificed their lives in service to our country in times of war and conflict. For others it

has evolved into a time to pray for peace and a world where war and hatred are no more and weapons and violence are no longer the tools we use to solve our differences.

As our chalice is lit Catherine and I will lead the congregation in today's responsive Invocation entitled This House. It is reading number #444 in your grey hymnal. I will lead these two sections . . .

(visually indicate which sections you are referring to)

with the words in regular font

**CATHERINE:** And I will lead these two sections along with the choir . . .

(visually indicate which sections you are referring to)

with the words in italics.

**LYLA:** I would like to ask Rabbi Baskin to light our chalice.

(Rabbi Baskin lights the chalice.)

**CATHERINE:** This house is for an ingathering of nature and human nature.

**LYLA:** It is a house of friendships, a haven in trouble, an open room for the encouragement of our struggle.

**CATHERINE:** It is a house of freedom, guarding the dignity and worth of every person.

**LYLA:** It offers a platform for the free voice, for declaring, both in times of security and danger, the full and undivided conflict of opinion.

**CATHERINE:** It is a house of truth-seeking, where scientists can encourage devotion to their quest, where mystics can abide in a community of searchers.

**LYLA:** It is a house of art, adorning its celebrations with melodies and handiworks.

**CATHERINE:** It is a house of prophecy, outrunning times past and times present in visions of growth and progress.

**LYLA:** This house is a cradle for our dreams, the workshop of our common endeavour.

## **5. Musical Invocation**

**Let There Be Peace**

**Pat Keefe and Eleanor Wrigley**

## **The Choir, Led by Cindy Carey**

**CATHERINE:** We will now listen to Pat Keefe and Eleanor Wrigley sing our Musical Invocation “Let There Be Peace” a traditional Israeli Folk Song.

### **6. Reading:**

#### **Is God Necessary? No! and Yes! by Herbert F. Vetter**

**LYLA:** Today’s reading comes from the book “Is God Necessary? No! and Yes!” by Unitarian Universalist historian and writer Herbert F. Vetter, the minister-at-large emeritus of the First Parish and the First Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts and the founder of the Harvard Square Library.

*Is God necessary? I am compelled to answer in the negative.*

*The classical idea of God is both an intellectual error and an illusion. God is understood to be outside of space, time, and the events, which constitute our daily and enduring life. If there were such a God, they would be utterly unknown and unknowable. For people, who live in a world of time-space events, any supposed reality outside of actual and possible events is sheer nothingness. If we assume that there is such a reality, it can be of no significance to us, for we have no means of apprehending such an other-worldly deity. Such a God is, at best, an oblong blur — hardly the appropriate object of our complete devotion.*

*But let us rephrase the question. Instead of asking, “Is God necessary?” why not ask, “What kind of God is necessary —for adequate human living, for our common task of reconstruction, for the integration of life’s poles in persons, peoples, cultures, worlds?”*

*We have a choice: to live or not to live for whatsoever God is True and Beautiful, Just and Whole. In fact, each person must choose, and each must meet the consequence of that decision. We live upon a boundary of choice and consequence. No one escapes—not really!*

*Part of the genius of liberal religion is that it does not require intellectual assent to any proposition, even the proposition that God is necessary. For this reason there are within our ranks those who justifiably reject the classical idea of God and who are alert to the havoc wrought by this idea. Such folks are citadels of free religious community. We need them! They are gadflies who sting our indolence and force profound, precise thinking. They adore with their lives the very God whom we adore, even if they choose not to affirm God’s name. Words are important—but not essential! Integrity of faith is important—and essential!*

*“Is God necessary?” or “Is Life necessary?” The questions are ultimately one and the same.*

## 7. Hymn of the Month: #1051 – “We Are ...”

**LYLA:** Please stand if you are able and let us join together in worship by singing our Hymn of The Month - hymn number #1051 from your aqua hymnal entitled We Are. For those of you who read music and have noted the repeats that are indicated please ignore them. We will instead sing the entire hymn through once from beginning to end without any repeats.

*For each child that's born, a morning star rises  
and sings to the universe who we are.*

*We are the grandmothers prayers  
And we are our grandfathers' dreaming,  
We are the breathe of our ancestors,  
We are the spirit of God.*

*We are mothers of courage  
And fathers of time,  
We are daughters of dust  
And the songs of great visions*

*We're sisters of mercy  
And brothers of love,  
We are lovers of life  
And the builders of nations,*

*We're seekers of truth  
And keepers of faith,  
We are makers of peace  
And the wisdom of ages.*

*We are grandmother's prayers  
And we are our grandfather's dreamings,  
We are the breath of our ancestors,  
We are the spirit of God.*

*For each child that's born  
A morning star rises  
And sings to the universe  
Who we are.*

## 8. Announcements

**CATHERINE:** Our written and oral announcements bring into our formal worship all the aspects of our life as a church community. In doing so, we remind ourselves that all we do is, in fact, a celebration of that which is of worth.

Please make a point of reading all the written announcements in your orders of service following today's service to find out more about the life of this church.

[read oral announcements]

We have a special announcement this morning from the Canvass Committee, which you won't find in your Order of Service. I now invite Michelle Corbeil and Mary Eve, our Canvass Committee Co-Chairs, to the pulpit to share it with you.

[Mary and Michelle's Canvass Announcement]

## **9. Offertory**

### **Ose Shalom**

#### **Our Choir, Led by Cindy Carey**

**LYLA:** Thank you Mary and Michelle. In the context of worship, the offering isn't just a way to pay our bills. It is an expression of the spirit of generosity, which is at the heart of our liberal religion.

We will now receive our offering while we listen to our Choir sing Ose Shalom.

(Let the ushers collect the offering while the music plays)

## **10. a) Meditation In Words**

### **God, Goddess, Gender and The Torah**

#### **By Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb**

**CATHERINE:** This is our time as a church community to come together to celebrate and grieve with our fellow congregants, supporting each other through both our struggles and our victories.

After the meditation in words, we will join together in silence and, after the silence, during the musical meditation, "Lord Make Me An Instrument", you are invited to come forward, and light a candle.

If you feel comfortable, please write your joy or sorrow and your full name in the grey binder, so we may share it with the rest of the congregation following the meditation in music.

This time in our worship is when we embrace the quiet and the silence to reflect on the words and music we hear.

Our Meditative Reading - *God, Goddess, Gender and The Torah* - comes from Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb.

*Shekhinah is She Who Dwells Within,  
The force that binds and patterns creation.  
She is Birdwoman, Dragonlady, Queen of the Heavens,  
Opener of the Way.*

*She is Mother of the Spiritworld,  
Morning and Evening, Star  
Dawn and Dusk.  
She is the Mistress of the Seas, Tree of Life,  
Silvery Moon, Fiery Sun.  
All these are Her Names.*

*Shekhinah is Changing Woman, Nature herself,  
Her own Law and Mystery.  
She is cosmos, dark hole, fiery moment of beginning.  
She is dust cloud, nebulae, the swirl of galaxies.  
She is gravity, magnetic field,  
The paradox of waves and particles.*

*Shekhinah is unseen dark, invisible web,  
Creatrix of complex systems,  
Expanding contracting, spiraling, meandering,  
The beginning of Wisdom.*

*Shekhinah is Grandmother, Grandfather,  
Unborn Child,  
Shekhinah is life loving itself into being ...*

## **10. b) Meditation In Silence**

(Wait one minute.)

**CATHERINE:** Shalom.

## **10. c) Meditation In Music**

**Lord Make Me An Instrument  
Our Choir, Led by Cindy Carey**

## **11. Joys & Sorrows/One Last Candle**

(Wait for Choir to finish and the candle line to conclude.)

**LYLA:** We have some Joys and Sorrows to share with you today, but first I would like to thank Carolyn Leman for the beautiful Star of David she brought in honour of Rabbi Baskin's visit today for our last candle display.

(Read written joys and sorrows.)

(Light the "Last Candle")

I lit one last candle for all those joys and sorrows, which remain in our hearts until the time comes to speak them aloud. Whatever our level of sharing, may this community be a blessing and support to us all.

## **12. Unison Words of Support**

**LYLA:** Please join me in reading our unison words of support #497, which can be found in your grey hymnal.

*Prayer invites God to be present in our spirits and in our lives.  
Prayer cannot bring water to parched land,  
Nor mend a broken bridge,  
Nor rebuild a ruined city,  
But prayer can water an arid soul,  
Mend a broken heart,  
And rebuild a weakened will.*

## **13. Hymn: #199 – Precious Lord, Take My Hand**

**LYLA:** Please stand if you are able and let us join together in worship by singing hymn number #199 from your grey hymnal entitled "Precious Lord, Take My Hand".

*Chorus: Precious Lord, take my hand  
Lead me on, let me stand.  
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn  
Through the storm, through the night,  
Lead me on to the light,  
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home*

*When my way grow drear,  
Precious Lord linger near,  
When my life is almost gone,  
Hear my cry, hear my call,  
Hold my hand lest I fall,  
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home*

*Chorus:*



*When the darkness appears,  
And the light draws near,  
And the day is past and gone,  
At the river I stand, guide my feet  
Hold my hand  
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home*

Chorus:

#### **14. Sermon: Is God Necessary?**

**RABBI BASKIN:** (Sermon Unavailable)

#### **15. Hymn: #198 – God of Many Names (Dropped due to time constraints)**

**CATHERINE:** Please stand if you are able and let us join together in worship by singing hymn number #198 from your grey hymnal entitled “God of Many Names”.

*God of many names, gathered into One,  
In your glory come and meet us,  
Moving, endlessly, becoming:  
God of hovering wings, Womb and birth of time,  
Joyfully we sing your praises,  
Breath of life in every people,*

*Chorus: hush, hush halleluiah, halleluiah!  
Shout, shout, halleluiah, halleluiah!  
Sing, sing, halleluiah, halleluiah!  
Sing God is love, God is love!*

*God of Jewish faith, Exodus and Law,  
In your glory come and meet us,  
Joy of Miriam and Moses:  
God of Jesus Christ, Rabbi of the poor,  
Joyfully we sing your praises,  
Crucified, alive forever  
Chorus:*

*God of wounded hands, web and loom of love  
In your glory come and meet us,  
Carpenter of new creation:  
God of many names gathered into One,  
Joyfully we sing your praises,  
Moving, endlessly becoming*

Chorus:

## 16. Chalice Extinguished/Benediction: #415 – Hevenu Shalom Aleychem

(Catherine will go to the mike and music stand on stage left in front of the piano.)

**LYLA:** Due to time we will not sing our next hymn, but don't think for a moment that this means you are going to get out of standing up and singing before the end of this service.

After our worship join our fellowship in the lobby. Today's Speakeasy Salon has been cancelled due to the Budget Lunch and Circle Meeting at Noon.

If you are a newcomer visit our newcomers table so you may know us better and grab a green mug for your beverage so we may know you better.

Please stand if you are able for our Musical Benediction, Hevenu Shalom Aleychem, as Rabbi Baskin extinguishes our Chalice. Catherine will sing the Benediction through once. We then ask the congregation to please join her on the repeat.

(Rabbi Baskin will extinguish the Chalice.)

**CATHERINE:**        *Hevenu shalom aleychem,  
                              Hevenu shalom aleychem,  
                              Hevenu shalom aleychem,  
                              hevenu shalom,  
                              shalom, shalom aleychem*

**CONGREGATION:** *Hevenu shalom aleychem,  
                              Hevenu shalom aleychem,  
                              Hevenu shalom aleychem,  
                              hevenu shalom,  
                              shalom, shalom aleychem*

**LYLA:** Now please remain seated as we listen to our Choir's Postlude "In Flanders Fields".

## 17. Postlude:

**In Flanders Fields**  
**Our Choir, Led by Cindy Carey**

## 18. Fellowship/Speakeasy Salon (Cancelled)