

**SERVICE LEADER SCRIPT
FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF HAMILTON
SUNDAY, AUGUST 22, 2010**

SERVICE TITLE: The Lord of The Rings: Just Wars, Evil, and Other Myths

SPEAKER/STORYTELLER: Lyla Miklos

SERVICE LEADER: Allan Sharp

MUSIC: Alexa Badal-Badalian, Cynthia Johnman, Maclean Johnman, Pamela Marques, Nathalie Pasche, Anne Marie Pavlov, and Lyla Miklos

HYMN ACCOMPANIMENT: Jeffrey Pollack

1. OVERTURE

(Soundtrack selections from Peter Jackson's LOTR films.)

Composer – Howard Shore

- At 10:25am the Service Leader goes into the Foyer and rings the Bell.

2. BELL

AL: (*While in the foyer.*) Our Gathering Music will begin in two minutes, please take your seats in the Sanctuary.

3. GATHERING MUSIC

Blowin' In The Wind (Bob Dylan)

Nathalie Pasche (lead vocals), Anne Marie Pavlov (guitar/vocals),

Pamela Marques (vocals), Maclean Johnman, Cynthia Johnman, Alexa Badal-Badalian, and Lyla Miklos (percussion/vocals)

AL: Please quietly take your seats as we enjoy our Gathering Music. Our Musicians ask everyone to please join in on singing the choruses.

NATHALIE: *How many roads must a man walk down*

Before you call him a man?

Yes, 'n' how many seas must a white dove sail

Before she sleeps in the sand?

Yes, 'n' how many times must the cannonballs fly

Before they're forever banned?

EVERYONE: *The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind*

The answer is blowin' in the wind

NATHALIE/PAMELA: *How many years can a mountain exist*

Before it's washed to the sea?

Yes, 'n' how many years can some people exist

Before they're allowed to be free?

Yes, 'n' how many times can a man turn his head

Pretending he just doesn't see?

EVERYONE: *The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind*
The answer is blowin' in the wind

NATHALIE/PAMELA: *How many times must a man look up*
Before he can see the sky?

Yes, 'n' how many ears must one man have

Before he can hear people cry?

Yes, 'n' how many deaths will it take till he knows

That too many people have died?

EVERYONE: *The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind*

The answer is blowin' in the wind

The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind

The answer is blowin' in the wind

4. WELCOME AND SINGING BOWL

AL: Good Morning!

Welcome to the First Unitarian Church of Hamilton.

Whoever you are, whomever you love, wherever you are on your journey of faith or search for meaning, thank you for joining us in this house of worship. We will share today a common point on our separate journeys through life. This time will never come again. And when we leave this place our sharing here will have changed us in some way, small or large,

My name is Al Sharp and I am a member of this church and Co-Chair of the Finance and Capital Funds Committee. This is my first opportunity to lead a service here and I am delighted to be assisting our Speaker and Storyteller today Lyla Miklos, Member of our Church and Co-Chair of our very active Worship Committee. Lyla's passion for pop culture has inspired her to explore from our pulpit the deeper spiritual messages found in Star Trek, Wonder Woman, Buffy, Xena, Lost, Harry Potter and Battlestar Galactica. Her sermon this morning is entitled The Lord of The Rings: Just Wars, Evil, and Other Myths.

We will now listen to our singing bowl. I invite you to be comfortable, close your eyes if you wish, and listen as the sound fades into the silence.

(play the singing bowl . . . and fade)

5. OPENING WORDS **Mother In Wartime** **By Langston Hughes**

AL: Our opening words this morning entitled Mother in Wartime by American American writer Langston Hughes.

As if it were some noble thing,
She spoke of sons at war,
As if freedom's cause
Were pled anew at some heroic bar,
As if the weapons used today
Killed with great élan,
As if Technicolor banners flew
To honour modern man –
Believing everything she read
In the daily news,
(No in-between to choose)
She thought that only
One side won,
Not that *both*
Might lose.

6. LIGHTING OF SANCTUARY AND CHILDREN'S CHALICES

AL: The Unitarian Universalist ritual of lighting our chalice marks our entry into sacred space and sacred time.

I invite Connie Bryce McKinlay to come forward to light our Sanctuary Chalice.

I also invite Maclean Johnman to come forward to light our Children's Chapel Chalice.

(Chalice Lighters light chalices and stay at Chalices until all the Unison Chalice Lighting Words have been read.)

7. UNISON CHALICE LIGHTING WORDS

**From The Lord of The Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring
by J.R.R. Tolkien**

AL: Please join me in reading our Unison Chalice Lighting Words, which can be found in your Order of Service.

May it be a light to you in dark places, when all other lights go out.

8. HYMN

**#168 – One More Step – STLT (Joyce Poley)
Jeffrey Pollock (piano)**

AL: Please stand if you are able and let us sing together in worship hymn number #168 from your grey hymnal entitled "One More Step".

CONGREGATION: *One more step,
we will take one more step,
'til there is peace for us and everyone,
we'll take one more step.*

*One more word,
we will say one more word,
'til every word is heard by everyone,
we'll say one more word.*

*One more prayer,
we will say one more prayer,
'til every prayer is shared by everyone,
we'll say one more prayer.*

*One more song,
We will sing more song,
'til every song is sung by everyone,
we'll sing one more song*

9. STORY FOR ALL AGES

Excerpts from the Chapter “*Riddles In the Dark*” from *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien and from the film *The Lord of The Rings: The Fellowship of the Rings*, Screenplay by Fran Walsh, Phillipa Boyens, and Peter Jackson, Based on the book by J.R.R. Tolkien. Illustrations by David Wenzel from *The Hobbit* graphic novel.

AL: And now Lyla has a great story to tell us all and some very neat pictures to show as well. The pictures are going to be projected on the wall back there. And so I'll invite all the children to please go and sit on the carpet in front of Lyla where you'll have a front row seat to see all those great pictures and I'll ask Lyla to give us her story.

LYLA: **[Project Story Pic 1 (Outside Bag End)]** In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit. Not a nasty, dirty, wet hole, nor yet a dry, bare sandy hole: it was a hobbit hole and that means comfort.

[Project Story Pic 2 (Gandalf and Bilbo)] The hobbit who lived in this hole was named Bilbo Baggins and he never went on any adventures until, the Wizard, Gandalf, recruited him for a quest. Bilbo would journey with Gandalf and thirteen dwarves lead by Thorin Oakenshield across Middle Earth to the Lonely Mountain where a dragon named Smaug reigned. **[Project Story Pic 3 (Smaug)]** Thorin hoped to regain his people's former glory by defeating the dragon and reclaiming the treasure and kingdom the dragon had taken from the dwarves.

[Project Story Pic 4 (Goblin Escape)] While Bilbo, Gandalf, Thorin and Company traveled across the Misty Mountains they were captured by Goblins. When they escaped Bilbo got separated from his friends and fell into a deep dark cavern in the heart of the Mountains.

[Project Story Pic 5 (Bilbo and The Ring)] Bilbo could hear nothing, see nothing, and feel nothing but the stone of the floor. Very slowly he got up and groped around till suddenly his hand met what felt like a tiny ring of cold metal lying on the floor of the tunnel. It was a turning point in his career, but he did not know it. He put the ring in his pocket almost without thinking; certainly it did not seem of any particular use at the moment.

[Project Story Pic 6 (Bilbo Meets Gollum)] In this cavern was a little lake with a tiny island where a small slimy creature named Gollum lived. He had two round pale eyes in his thin face. He was fishing with his bare hands when he spotted Bilbo at the edge of the lake. Bilbo looked like a far more yummy dinner than a cold wet fish.

Gollum might have eaten Bilbo if he hadn't made so much noise paddling over in his boat. As a result Bilbo thrust his dagger at Gollum to protect himself. Gollum was afraid of Bilbo's dagger, but Gollum was also lonely for he had lived alone in the mountain for so long that he had almost forgotten what it was like to talk and share with another living being.

So Gollum asked Bilbo to play a game of riddles with him. **[Project Story Pic 7 (The Riddle Game)]**

Gollum asked the first riddle.

*What has roots as nobody sees.
Is taller than trees
Up, up it goes,
And yet never grows?*

"Easy!" said Bilbo "Mountain."

"Does it guess easy? It must have a competition with us, my precious! If precious asks, and it doesn't answer, we eats it, my precious. If it asks us, and we don't answer, then we does what it wants eh? We shows it the way out, yes!"

"All right!" said Bilbo, not daring to disagree, and nearly bursting his brain to think of riddles that could save him from being eaten.

And so a deadly game of riddles began with Bilbo knowing his life was on the line with every guess he made and riddle he asked. Bilbo and Gollum kept asking and answering riddle after riddle without being able to stump each other.

Bilbo then asked a riddle that he felt was really easy to buy some time.

*A box without hinges, key, or lid
Yet golden treasure inside is hid*

This riddle proved to be a nasty poser for Gollum. He hissed to himself, and still he did not answer, he whispered and spluttered.

After some while Bilbo became impatient. "Well, what is it?" he said, "The answer is not a kettle boiling over, as you seem to think from the noise you are making."

But suddenly Gollum remembered thieving from nests long ago, and sitting under the riverbank teaching his grandmother, teaching his grandmother to suck – "Egges!" he hissed. "Eggses it is!"

Then Gollum asked:

*This thing all things devours:
Birds, beasts, trees, flowers;
Gnaws iron, bites steel;
Grinds hard stones to meal;
Slays kings, ruins towns,
And beats high mountain down.*

Poor Bilbo sat in the dark thinking of all the horrible names of all the giants and ogres he had ever heard told of in tales, but not one of them had done all these things. He had a feeling that the answer was quite different and that he ought to know it, but he could not think of it. He began to get frightened and that is bad for thinking. Bilbo saw Gollum liking his lips coming towards him and he wanted to shout "Give me more time! Give me time!", but all that came out was a sudden squeal: "Time! Time!"

Bilbo was saved by pure luck. For that of course was the answer.

But now after being so frightened Bilbo could think of no more riddles so he started to fiddle with the ring in his pocket and said quietly to himself "What have I got in my pocket?"

"Not fair! Not Fair!" Gollum hissed. "It isn't fair, my precious, is it, to ask us what it's got in it's nasty pockets?"

Bilbo realized that Gollum took his mindless question to himself to be a riddle. "What have I got in my pocket?"

"It must give us three guesses, three guesses"

“Very well! Guess away!”

“Hands!”

“Wrong. Guess again!”

“Knife!”

“Wrong. Last guess! Come on. I’m waiting. Times up!”

“String or nothing!”

“Both wrong,” cried Bilbo. He knew, of course that the riddle-game was of immense antiquity, and even wicked creatures were afraid to cheat when they played at it. But he felt he could not trust this slimy thing to keep any promise at a pinch.

“Well? What about your promise? I want to go. You must show me the way.”

A nasty plan now grew in Gollum’s mind. Gollum was hungry and frustrated that he wasn’t going to be able to eat Bilbo.

Gollum told Bilbo he would help him to get back to his friends, but first he needed to retrieve something from his home to help them on their journey. What Gollum was going to get was a magic ring that could make him invisible so he could still eat Bilbo, but unbeknownst to both of them the ring was in Bilbo’s pocket.

When Gollum got home and couldn’t find his ring he pitched a fit, which scared the wits out of Bilbo. Bilbo then discovered that the ring in his pocket could make him invisible and now he knew what Gollum was screaming about.

[Project Story Pic 8 (Gollum Curses Bilbo)] Gollum started going up the tunnel that would lead you out of the cavern looking for Bilbo. Bilbo while wearing Gollum’s ring of invisibility followed softly and quietly behind him.

But soon the tunnel became too narrow for Bilbo to go past Gollum. Gollum became very still and could sense that Bilbo was near.

Bilbo almost stopped breathing and went stiff himself. He was desperate. He must get away, out of this horrible darkness, while he had any strength left. He must fight. He must stab the foul thing, put its eyes out, kill it. It meant to kill him. No, not a fair fight. He was invisible now. Gollum had no sword. Gollum had not actually threatened to kill him, or tried to yet. And he was miserable, alone, lost. A sudden understanding, a pity mixed with horror, welled up in Bilbo’s heart: a glimpse of endless days without light or hope of betterment, hard stone, cold fish,

sneaking and whispering. All these thoughts passed in a flash of a second. He trembled. And then quite suddenly in another flash, as if lifted by a new strength and resolve, he leaped right over Gollum and ran and ran and never looked back while Gollum screamed and cursed his name.

[Project Story Pic 9 (Bilbo Is Back at Home)] Eventually Bilbo found Gandalf, Thorin and the dwarves and they continued on their adventure.

Many years later Bilbo's nephew, Frodo, would also have an adventure with the Wizard Gandalf making a great journey across Middle Earth to destroy the ring Bilbo stole from Gollum. For its powers went well beyond turning its wearer invisible. It was THE Ring of Power of the Dark Lord Sauron.

One evening during their adventures Gandalf and Frodo discussed Bilbo's encounter with Gollum. **[Project Story Pic 10 (Frodo and Gandalf)]**

Frodo said, "It's a pity Bilbo didn't kill Gollum when he had the chance."

Gandalf replied, "Pity? It is pity that stayed Bilbo's hand. Many that live deserve death. Some that die deserve life. Can you give it to them Frodo? Do not be too eager to deal out death and judgment. Even the very wise cannot see all ends. My heart tells me that Gollum has some part to play yet, for good or ill before this is over. The pity of Bilbo may rule the fate of many."

Frodo laments, "I wish the ring had never come to me. I wish none of this had happened."

Gandalf assures him, "So do all who live to see such times, but that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us. There are other forces at work in the world, Frodo, besides the will of evil. Bilbo was meant to find the ring. In which case, you were also meant to have it. And that is an encouraging thought."

And that is the end of the story.

10. CHILDREN'S RECESSIONAL HYMN As You Go (Suzelle Lynch and John Ruben Piirainen)

LYLA: Children's Chapel Chalice lighters please come forward and receive your chalice. Children and youth please form a line behind them.

Everyone, please stand as you are able. Congregants sitting in aisle seats please join hands across the aisle and create a bridge for our children to walk under.

Now join me in singing our Children's Recessional Hymn, which can be found in your order of service.

*As you go may joy surround you, as you go, go in peace.
Know our love is with you always, as you go, as you go.*

AL: Please be seated.

11. ANNOUNCEMENTS

AL: Our announcements bring into our formal worship many other aspects of our life as a church community.

If you have a Joy or a Sorrow you would like shared with the congregation during today's service please write it out and leave it on the table underneath the hanging tapestry by the east Sanctuary doors before the Prelude ends.

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

If you would like a tax receipt for your offertory donations, don't forget to write your name on the brown envelopes, which were handed out by our Ushers and can also be found on the hymnal bookshelves.

After our worship please join our Fellowship in the lobby. If you are a new comer and would like to know more about us, please see Ali Steinbergs and Mary Scott at the Newcomers Kiosk just in front of the library.

There are a couple of very brief announcements inside your orders of service and I ask you to look at those and understand those opportunities.

It has been said many times here that our church is blessed with the talent and enthusiasm of our many music ministers week after week. Today our Music Ministers are Alexa Badal-Badalian, Cynthia Johnman, Maclean Johnman, Pamela Marques, Nathalie Pasche, Anne Marie Pavlov, and Lyla Miklos with Hymn Accompaniment by Jeffrey Pollock.

12. PRELUDE

With God On Our Side (Bob Dylan)

**Anne Marie Pavlov (guitar/ lead vocals), Lyla Miklos (vocals),
Pamela Marques (vocals), and Nathalie Pasche (violin/vocals)**

AL: Our Musicians will now share with us our Prelude.

ANNE MARIE: *Oh my name it is nothin'
My age it means less
The country I come from
Is called the Midwest
I's taught and brought up there
The laws to abide
And that the land that I live in
Has God on its side*

LYLA: *Oh the history books tell it
They tell it so well
The cavalries charged
The Indians fell
The cavalries charged
The Indians died
Oh the country was young
With God on its side*

MACLEAN: *Oh the Spanish-American
War had its day
And the Civil War too
Was soon laid away
And the names of the heroes
I's made to memorize
With guns in their hands
And God on their side*

NATHALIE: *Oh the First World War, boys
It closed out its fate
The reason for fighting
I never got straight
But I learned to accept it
Accept it with pride
For you don't count the dead
When God's on your side*

PAMELA (w/ LYLA/ANNE MARIE/NATHALIE underneath):
*When the Second World War
Came to an end
We forgave the Germans
And we were friends
Though they murdered six million
In the ovens they fried
The Germans now too
Have God on their side*

ANNE MARIE/LYLA: *I've learned to hate Russians*

All through my whole life

If another war starts

It's them we must fight

ANNE MARIE/LYLA/PAMELA: *To hate them and fear them*

To run and to hide

And accept it all bravely

With God on my side

ANNE MARIE/LYLA/PAM/MACLEAN: *But now we got weapons*

Of the chemical dust

If fire them we're forced to

Then fire them we must

One push of the button

And a shot the world wide

And you never ask questions

When God's on your side

ANNE MARIE: *Through many dark hour*

I've been thinkin' about this

That Jesus Christ

Was betrayed by a kiss

But I can't think for you

You'll have to decide

Whether Judas Iscariot

Had God on his side

ANNE MARIE/LYLA/PAM/NATHALIE/MACLEAN: *So now as I'm leavin'*

I'm weary as Hell

The confusion I'm feelin'

Ain't no tongue can tell

The words fill my head

And fall to the floor

If God's on our side

He'll stop the next war

13. READINGS

from Anne Frank and Bishop Oscar Romero

AL: Our first reading today is from Anne Frank. Talking about World War Two, she had this to say: *"I don't believe that the big men, the politicians and the capitalists alone are guilty of the war. Oh, no, the little man is just as keen, otherwise the people of the world would have risen in revolt long ago! There is an urge and rage in people to destroy, to kill, to murder, and until all mankind, without exception, undergoes a great change, wars will be waged, everything*

that has been built up, cultivated and grown, will be destroyed and disfigured, after which mankind will have to begin all over again.”

Our second reading is from Archbishop Bishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador. Speaking of the civil war in El Salvador which ultimately claimed his life. *“Peace is not the product of terror or fear. Peace is not the silence of cemeteries. Peace is not the silent revolt of violent repression. Peace is the generous, tranquil contribution of all to the good of all. Peace is dynamism. Peace is generosity. It is right and it is duty.”*

14. OFFERTORY WORDS

Reading #574 – *The Glories of Peace* (Micah 3:4) – STLJ

AL: We are now prepared to take up our offer. In sharing our financial resources we ensure the continued existence of our church. Your financial contributions make a difference. We thank you for giving as generously as you are able.

Please join me in reading our offertory words, reading number 574, in your grey hymnal, it is entitled *The Glories of Peace*.

(Give congregants a moment to find their place in order of service.)

(Read reading along with the congregation.)

CONGREGATION: *They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more; But they shall all sit under their own vines and fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid.*

14. OFFERTORY MUSIC

***May It Be* (Enya, Niky Ryan, and Roma Ryan)**

Pamela Marques (lead vocals), Anne Marie Pavlov (guitar/vocals),

Nathalie Pasche (violin), Lyla Miklos (vocals/xylophone), and

Maclean Johnman (percussion/vocals)

AL: We will now receive our offering while we listen to our Music Ministers.

PAM: *Mornie utúlië (darkness has come)*

Believe and you will find your way

Mornie alantië (darkness has fallen)

A promise lives within you now

May it be an evening star

Shines down upon you

May it be when darkness falls

Your heart will be true

*You walk a lonely road
Oh! How far you are from home*

PAM/LYLA: *Mornie utúlië (darkness has come)
Believe and you will find your way
Mornie alantië (darkness has fallen)
A promise lives within you now*

PAM: *May it be the shadows call
Will fly away
May it be you journey on
To light the day
When the night is overcome
You may rise to find the sun*

PAM/LYLA: *Mornie utúlië (darkness has come)
Believe and you will find your way
Mornie alantië (darkness has fallen)
A promise lives within you now*

15. OFFERTORY HYMN OF GRATITUDE
Hymn #402 – From You I Receive – STLT (Joseph and Nathan Segal)

AL: Please in singing our Offertory Hymn of Gratitude. The lyrics are projected onto the wall. Ushers please bring our offering forward to the front of the church as we join together in song.

CONGREGATION: *From you I receive, to you I give, together we share, and from this we live.*

16. JOYS AND SORROWS

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

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

I have some Joys and Sorrows to share with you today.

(Read written joys and sorrows.)

17. MEDITATION IN WORDS

Excerpt from Lester B. Pearson's 1957 Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech

AL: Lester B. Pearson, one of Canada's Prime Ministers, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1957 for his invention of the United Nations Peace Keepers. Our Meditative reading comes from his acceptance speech for that prize.

"That problem, why men fight who aren't necessarily fighting men, was posed for me in a new and dramatic way one Christmas Eve in London during World War II. The air-raid sirens had given their grim and accustomed warning. Almost before the last dismal moan had ended, the anti-aircraft guns began to crash. In between their bursts I could hear the deeper more menacing sound of bombs. It wasn't much of a raid, really, but one or two of the bombs seemed to fall too close to my room. I was reading in bed and, to drown out or at least to take my mind off the bombs, I reached out and turned on the radio. I was fumbling aimlessly with the dial when the room was flooded with the beauty and peace of Christmas carol music. Glorious waves of it wiped out the sound of war and conjured up visions of happier peacetime Christmases. Then the announcer spoke - in German - for it was a German station and they were Germans who were singing those carols. Nazi bombs screaming through the air with their message of war and death; German music drifting through the air with its message of peace and salvation. When we resolve the paradox of those two sounds from a single national source, we will, at last, be in a good position to understand and solve the problem of peace and war."

17. MEDITATION IN SILENCE

AL: Now, may we all bring our thoughts or prayers to rest in the welcoming silence.

(Wait one minute.)

AL: May the peace of that welcoming silence remaining with you.

18. MEDITATION IN MUSIC

Roads Go Ever Ever On (Words by J.R.R. Tolkien, Additional Words and Music by Glenn Yarborough)

Lyla Miklos (lead vocals), Anne Marie Pavlov (guitar/vocals), Pamela Marques (piano/vocals), Nathalie Pasche (vocals), and Maclean Johnman (vocals)

LYLA: *Roads Go Ever Ever On
Over rock and under tree
By caves where never sun has shown
By streams that never find the sea*

*Roads Go Ever Ever On
Under cloud and under star
Yet feet that wandering have gone
Will turn at last to home afar*

*Over snow by winter sown
And through the merry flowers of June
Over grass and over stone
Under the mountains in the moon*

LYLA/ANNE MARIE/NATHALIE/PAM/MACLEAN: *Roads go ever ever on,
to the lands beyond the sea.
On a white ship will I sail,
watching shadows part for me.*

*Feeling havens grave with rain.
Now the years have slipped away.
Leaving friends with gentle pain
As they start up the day.*

*Roads I traveled I must leave
For I've turned the final bend
Weep not empty tears, but grieve
As the road comes to an end*

*It's so easy not to try
Let the world go drifting by
If you never say hello
You won't have to say goodbye*

LYLA: *If you never say hello
You won't have to say goodbye*

19. ONE LAST CANDLE

(Light the "Last Candle")

AL: 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.

20. UNISON WORDS OF SUPPORT (from the film *The Lord of The Rings: The Fellowship of the Rings*, Screenplay by Fran Walsh, Phillipa Boyens, and Peter Jackson, Based on the book by J.R.R. Tolkien.)

AL: Please join me in reading our unison words of support, which are printed in your order of service.

CONGREGATION: *You cannot always be torn in two. You have to be one and whole for many years. You have so much to enjoy and to be and to do. Your part in the story will go on.*

21. HYMN

Last Night I Had The Strangest Dream (Ed McCurdy)
Jeffrey Pollock (piano), Pamela Marques (cantor)

AL: Please stand if you are able and let us join together in worship by singing “*Last Night I Had The Strangest Dream*”. Lyrics can be found in your order of service and projected against the wall. Pamela will lead us in this song.

CONGREGATION: *Last night I had the strangest dream
I ever dreamed before,
I dreamed the world had all agreed,
to put an end to war.*

*I dreamed there was a mighty room,
And the room was filled with men,
And the paper they were signing said
they'd never fight again.*

*And when the paper was all signed,
And a million copies made,
They all joined hands and circled 'round,
And grateful prayers were made.*

*And the people on the streets below
Were dancing 'round and 'round,
With swords and guns and uniforms
All scattered on the ground.*

*Last night I had the strangest dream
I ever dreamed before,
I dreamed the world had all agreed,
to put an end to war.*

22. SERMON

The Lord of The Rings: Just Wars, Evil, and Other Myths
Lyla Miklos

LYLA: Do you remember where you were on November 4, 2008?

I know where I was.

Sitting in front of my television watching history in the making.

Barak Obama became the 44th President of the United States of American. An African-American had finally become the leader of the USA.

I had an image of Obama walking into the White House ridding the entire place of every vestige of the former administration's policies of fear. Kind of like when Jesus walked into the temple and saw all the merchants selling their wares and told them to get out and stop defiling his father's house. Obama was going to be our new Messiah and save us all from ourselves.

Well here we are nearly two years later. It's August 22, 2010.

Americans are still at war in Iraq and Afghanistan. (Troop withdrawals notwithstanding.) The infamous Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp is still up and running. New racist policies towards immigrants are being put into practice on the state level. And the effects of the BP oil spill will have ramifications for generations to come.

Our former hope has now turned into a malaise.

Our saviour has proved to be a mere human being in the end.

Hence my indignation when on October 9, 2009, it was announced that Obama had won the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize. I respect Obama, but the Nobel Peace Prize!?! He hasn't done anything to deserve this award. He hasn't even kept the promises he made during his campaign in regards to Iraq and Gitmo. There are so many peace activists out there who were far more deserving of this honour. A fact that Obama would later acknowledge in his acceptance speech in Oslo, Norway on December 10, 2009.

Yet, Obama would add even more sting to this series of events when he used his acceptance speech as an opportunity to be an apologist for war and invoked rhetoric of the George W. Bush variety.

In his speech, Obama would talk about war being with us since the dawn of time. That some wars are deemed just, "for make no mistake: evil does exist in the world. A non-violent movement could not have halted Hitler's armies. Negotiations cannot convince al Qaeda's leaders to lay down their arms. To say that force is sometimes necessary is not a call to cynicism - it is a recognition of history; the imperfections of man and the limits of reason." ¹

"Some wars are deemed just and evil does exist and sometimes force is necessary."

Rather chilling words to proclaim while accepting a prize for peace.

What exactly makes a war just?

Just War theory is kind of a moral algebra equation in which leaders in positions of military authority weigh concepts such as Just Cause, Legitimate Authority, Right Intention, Last Resort, Proportionality, and Probability of Success to deem whether killing fellow human beings is the only viable solution to a conflict. ²

All very logical and reasonable.

In fact so logical and reasonable a theory that at the 1917 General Assembly of the American Unitarian Association 236 to 9 supported America's involvement in World War One as a defense of democracy. Several ministers who subsequently took principled pacifist positions lost their pulpits. In 1918 the AUA Board issued a remarkable statement: "Any society which engages a minister who is not a willing, earnest, and outspoken supporter of the United States in the vigorous and resolute prosecution of the war cannot be considered eligible for aid from the Association." The AUA formally apologized in 1936, calling the 1918 statement "contrary to the fundamental principle of freedom of thought and conscience." ³

Hmmm . . . Just wars?

I don't know about you, but I go with Rabbi Bernard Baskin's assessment of war; "all war is unholy -- desecrating what it proclaims to defend." ⁴

Still Obama's words echo: "Evil does exist and sometimes force is necessary."

I believe Obama is a good man, but I also think now that he has his own oppressive ring of power to wear, the office of the President of the United States, he has a harder time seeing humanity with as much hope as he once envisioned.

Evil.

As Unitarians we wrestle with that word a lot.

Coretta Scott King and her husband, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had attended Unitarian Universalist churches many times during Martin's graduate student days in Boston. They had seriously considered becoming UUs, but ultimately decided against it. One reason being that UUs have a far too benign view of human nature, are far too optimistic in their view of humanity, and do not take seriously enough the reality of humankind's capacity for evil. ⁵

J.R.R. Tolkien, creator of the fantasy series "The Lord of The Rings", had no ambiguity about the existence of evil in the world or in his fellow human beings. A

devout Roman Catholic he would begin to create the land of Middle Earth while fighting in the trenches during World War One. Tolkien states in his forward to the Lord of The Rings that his book is not a direct allegory about any real world events, but you can feel the influence of Tolkien's faith and wartime experiences peppered throughout his novels.

The fight between good and evil in Tolkien's trilogy is easy to define. The bad guys are Orcs, Goblins, Trolls, Nazgul, Urakai and other agents of the Dark Lord Sauron. Some baddies are even specifically bred and hatched to do nothing but the bidding of their evil Overlords. The good guys are Hobbits, Elves, Dwarves, Ents, and various mystical creatures. The characters who seem to have the hardest time defining which side they are on are the humans who feel the pull of both the light and the dark forces.

While Tolkien was a student at Oxford he confided in a Catholic professor that the outbreak of World War One had come as a profound blow to him, 'the collapse of all my world', as he later put it. Tolkien had been prone to fits of profound melancholy, even despair, ever since the death of his mother, though he kept it to himself. The new life he had slowly built up since her death was now in peril. Hearing his complaint, however, the Catholic professor responded that this war was no aberration: on the contrary, for the human race it was merely 'back to normal'.⁶

Back to normal?

I remember being a panelist on a now defunct talk show on Cable 14 called "The Opinionators" a couple of years ago. We were discussing the economic collapse and possible solutions. One of my fellow panelists with well know right wing political leanings glibly stated that what got us out of the Great Depression was Word War Two, so all we needed was another war to get us out of our current economic slump. The other panelist agreed. I was horrified and said so on air. Had they forgotten that the US was already at war and it was a war that was putting Canada's biggest trading partner into the most crushing debt the world had ever seen. War was not a solution. An economy based on death and destruction was not a sustainable one. If we truly wanted to create an economy that would provide for future generations a culture of peace was what we needed.

Many see the Lord of the Rings as a parallel for Word War Two with Sauron and his forces of darkness representing Hitler and his Nazi Regime in Germany.

It seems to be an accepted "universal truth" that going to war against Hitler's Nazis was just. In fact this "truth" has been so embedded into our historic narrative that there have been numerous works of speculative fiction which all depict a construct of the future in which the Nazis win the war and the entire planet lives under a dystopian dictatorship.

Sauron, the leader of the enemy in the Lord of the Rings embodies the forces of evil and darkness and seems to be able to rally legions of minions to join his cause, but we never really know why he chooses his path of domination over all the people of Middle Earth. Nor do we really know why all the “bad” people join him. Better health care benefits, free housing, and a four-day workweek? I don’t think these we’re the motivations for the forces of evil to join Sauron.

But there is something very attractive about being around power.

There was a company I once worked for where it was quite common practice for women to work up the corporate food chain by sleeping their way to the top with particular male executives. Being somewhat naïve at the time I couldn’t understand the attraction these men had for these women. A male colleague said it had nothing to do with their physical attributes, but with the power they exuded out of every pore.

In an April 2010 Vanity Fair article about the David Letterman sex scandal another comedian and friend of Letterman’s said he was in no way surprised that Letterman was having sexual relationships outside of his marriage. After all the power he had accumulated he had earned it. ⁷

In the same issue of Vanity Fair there is a sneak peak into Oliver Stone’s new sequel to his acclaimed movie Wall Street starring Michael Douglas as Gordon Gekko. The character who coined the phrase “Greed is Good”.

Michael Douglas often expresses his astonishment at the many Wall Street males who have sought him out in public places just to say, “Man, I want to tell you, you are the single biggest reason I got into the business. I watched Wall Street, and I wanted to be Gordon Gekko.” The film’s equally perplexed screenwriter, Stanley Weiser, has made the same point in a different way. “We wanted to capture the hyper-materialism of the culture,” he said, “That was always the intent of the movie. Not to make Gordon Gekko a hero.” ⁸

I once ran a political campaign to be an NDP candidate for a provincial election. I didn’t win the nomination, but I remember my initial meeting with folks from the riding association and telling them that I might appeal to voters who are looking for a working class person like themselves that they could identify with and feel speaks for them. I was promptly told that people don’t vote for people who are just like themselves. People vote for people who are more powerful than them.

We are drawn to power. Whether we proactively seek it or want to be around it there is an attraction to it within us.

In the Lord of the Rings the One Ring that Bilbo steals from Gollum and Frodo later carries across Middle Earth to throw into the fires of Mount Doom is the

ultimate embodiment of the phrase: "Power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Almost every character that comes into close proximity of the ring is tempted by it. There was a time in my life when I too was determinedly in search of acquiring power, but in the end I found this to be a rather empty quest.

Power for the sake of power alone is built on a shaky foundation. For you can never have enough power and you are always looking behind your back in fear of anyone who might take your power away.

But what about evil?

Isn't Sauron from the Lord of the Rings an example of a completely evil being? Tolkien remarks in a letter, that Sauron represents the most corrupt will possible. But even a totally corrupt person is still a person, an existing creature with powers and capacities that are not evil in themselves. As the wise elf Elrond from Rivendell says, "nothing is evil in the beginning. Even Sauron was not so." ⁹

I bet you didn't know that when Hitler was a young man his deepest yearning and passion was to go to Art School and become a painter. ¹⁰ It's tantamount to blasphemy to talk about Hitler as if he was a human being. He is evil incarnate. Beyond redemption. There has been many a piece of speculative fiction imaging what would have happened if someone had gone back in time and murdered Hitler as he came out of his Mother's womb. Maybe all the horrors of World War Two might never have happened? Perhaps. But Hitler's Nazi movement didn't come into being in a vacuum. Hitler didn't invent anti-Semitism or genocide. Hundreds if not thousands were culpable and complicit in the atrocities that took place under his leadership. The intoxicating taste of hate can fuel those who feel powerless to rage against scapegoats. Hatred can fill a hole. What many fail to see is that feeding emptiness with bile ultimately leads to your own self-destruction.

The preeminent man of Peace at the time – Mahatma Gandhi knew this. He believed in the goodness of humanity. He never felt that any human was beyond redemption. He reached out to Hitler as only Gandhi knew how in the spirit of friendship and love. He wrote two open letters to Hitler pleading with him to stop his war machine and embrace the practice of non-violence. People were outraged and horrified that Gandhi would attempt to humanize this monster. Was Gandhi indifferent to the suffering of Hitler's victims? Ignorant? Naive? Or just plain stupid? Gandhi would not have been Gandhi if he hadn't attempted to prevent World War Two. Whether the Gandhian approach could have succeeded in preventing World War Two we will never know, but the Mahatma would not have been the Mahatma if he had tried any other method. ¹¹

In *The Lord of The Rings* and *The Hobbit* both Bilbo and Frodo show compassion for Gollum a wretched creature who has been reduced to skin, bones, hatred and self-loathing from the unnaturally long life Sauron's ring has given him and his addiction to its power. Bilbo feels pity for Gollum because he has a sudden flash of realization that this sad being could have been him if circumstances had been different. Frodo knowing that Gollum once long ago used to be a Hobbit like himself is able to reach towards the very dim light of goodness still left in Gollum. Both Bilbo and Frodo acknowledge the light and dark in themselves and hence are able to make room in their hearts to forgive Gollum and try to help him find redemption too. Mahatma Gandhi would have been proud.

Canada joined the war against the Nazis long before our American neighbours to the South. But, when the vote to go to war came to the House of Commons J.S. Woodsworth, the leader of, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, a precursor to the New Democratic Party was the lone vote against the motion. 12.

Woodsworth a devout Pacifist, who resigned his Methodist Ministry in 1918 after his denomination, took an official stance in support of the war and conscription had been the leader of the CCF ever since its inception. 13.

His daughter Grace MacInnis recalls the events that transpired before and during that fateful vote. "Father called on his party to follow him in his pacifist course and oppose Canada's participation in the war. The party was torn, some members genuinely sharing his beliefs. But the majority had come, over the years of Hitler's horror, to the conviction that Canada could no longer stand aside. The Council took the decision to enter the war. At once J. S. Woodsworth would have resigned, both on principle and because he was heartbroken.

It was at this point that he received his highest tribute and revealed his own greatness most fully. They begged him to stay as the leader of the party. He would, of course, speak in Parliament, not for the party, but for himself. The party would have another spokesman who would put forward its position.

When he spoke in Parliament the following day it was as a man apart, as a prophet. Frail and aging, he poured into that single speech his whole molten hatred of war, of its utter senselessness and uselessness, of his personal determination to oppose it to the end and of his hope that some day men would learn to live as brothers. As he finished his speech, silence, the silence of utter respect, brooded over the Chamber. 14.

This year's Oscar Winner for Best Picture *The Hurt Locker* starts off with a quote from Chris Hedges – "The rush of battle is often a potent and lethal addiction, for war is a drug." 15. I usually am not a fan of war films. Inevitably they end up glorifying war. But there was something a bit different about this film. I got the usual war is hell message, but more than that I got a war is insanity message. The main soldier in the film, a bomb-defusing expert stationed in Iraq, returns

home to his family during a brief respite between missions. He can't even function. He's lost all sense of reality. The war has claimed his soul.

As much as those in power seem to believe that war and violence is an inevitable part of the human experience; time and time again our moral compass tells us this is simply just not so. It is unnatural for us to kill each other and invoking the label of evil to justify going to war against our fellow human beings is the height of hubris.

How can we reclaim our natural inclination to life and peace rather than death and destruction as a human species? It is a commitment to a deep spiritual practice on all of our parts to be more than we have been as a human species. We all have that capacity within us. War and violence is beneath us. We know it in our bones, yet we cling on to it like a raggedy security blanket because it's all we have ever know for so long. The unknown is frightening, but it is also filled with so much hope and possibility.

It is not the job of God, a Messiah, a Politician, or a Prophet to end war in our time.

It is our job, humanity's, to end war once and for all.

All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us. ¹⁶.

Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish captured hearts and headlines around the world in the aftermath of horrific tragedy: on January 16, 2009 Israeli shells hit his home in the Gaza Strip, killing three of his daughters and a niece.

In his memoir "I Shall Not Hate" he says, "As a physician and a Muslim of deep faith, I need to move forward in to light, motivated by the spirits of those I lost. I need to bring them to justice.

There's a story I have been telling in my speeches that sums up the potential of one small act in the face of a situation that seems insurmountable. A man is walking along the seashore as the tide ebbs, revealing a multitude of stranded starfish. Soon he comes upon a young girl, who is picking up the starfish one by one returning them to the sea.

So he asks the girl, "What are you doing?"

And she replies, "They will die if I don't get them back in the water."

"But there are so many of them," the man says. "How can anything you do make a difference?"

The girl picks up another starfish and carries it to the sea. "It makes a difference to this one." 17.

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4. All war is unholy: Peace seems as far away as ever by Rabbi Bernard Baskin, *The Hamilton Spectator*, November 11, 2009
5. *Deliver Us from Evil* a sermon delivered by Dr. Edward Frost at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta on November 17, 2002
6. Tolkien and The Great War by John Garth (London, UK: Harper Collins Publishers, 2003)
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11. Mahatma Gandhi's Letters to Hitler by Dr. Koenraad Elst. November 2004. - <http://koenraadelst.bharatvani.org/articles/fascism/gandhihitler.html>
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15. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0887912/quotes>
16. *The Lord of The Rings: The Fellowship of the Rings*, Screenplay by Fran Walsh, Phillipa Boyens, and Peter Jackson, Based on the book by J.R.R. Tolkien. 2001. New Line Cinema.
17. I Shall Not Hate: A Gaza Doctor's Journey by Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish (Toronto: Random House of Canada Ltd., 2010)

23. HYMN
#162 – Gonna Lay Down My Sword and Shield – STLT
(African American Spiritual)
Jeffrey Pollock (piano)

[Musicians will get into the aisles with shakers and tambourines and encourage congregants to dance and make a joyful noise during this hymn.]

AL: Please stand if you are able and let us join together in worship by singing hymn number #162 from your grey hymnal entitled “Gonna Lay Down My Sword and Shield”.

CONGREGATION: *Gonna lay down my sword and shield,
down by the riverside,
down by the riverside,
down by the riverside.
Gonna lay down my sword and shield,
down by the riverside,
gonna study war no more.*

*(Chorus)
I ain't gonna study war no more,
I ain't gonna study war no more,
Ain't gonna study war no more.
I ain't gonna study war no more,
I ain't gonna study war no more,
Ain't gonna study war no more.*

*Gonna lay down my burden,
down by the riverside,
down by the riverside,
down by the riverside.
Gonna lay down my burden,
down by the riverside,
gonna study war no more.*

(Chorus)

*Gonna shake hands around the world,
everywhere I roam,
everywhere I roam,
everywhere I roam.
Gonna shake hands around the world,
everywhere I roam,
gonna study war no more.*

(Chorus)

- 23. CHALICE EXTINGUISHED/CLOSING WORDS**
From the 1977 animated film *The Hobbit*, Screenplay by
Romeo Muller, Based on the book by J.R.R. Tolkien

AL: Please be seated.

I ask Connie Bryce McKinley to extinguish our chalice as I share our Closing Words, which come from the animated film *The Hobbit*.

These are the parting words of the Hobbit, Bilbo, and the Dwarf, Thorin, after the Battle of Five Armies.

Thorin begins, "Farewell good thief. I wish to part in friendship and will take back my words at the gate."

Bilbo replies, "There are many words I would take back also"

THORIN: And does it take this to make us see each other.

BILBO: Thorin!

THORIN: Hush. You are no coward my friend. I'm sorry I so named you.

BILBO: This is not important.

THORIN: And I was wrong. You did understand war. It was I who did not. Until now.

BILBO: Farewell King Under the Mountain.

THORIN: Child of the kindly west, I have come to know if more of us valued your ways – food and cheer above hoarded gold, it would be a merrier world. But sad or merry I must leave it now. Farewell.

24. POSTLUDE

Waiting On The World To Change (John Mayer)

Anne Marie Pavlov (guitar/lead vocals), Maclean Johnman (electric guitar/vocals), Pamela Marques (piano), Nathalie Pasche (violin), and Lyla Miklos (percussion/vocals), Cynthia Johnman (percussion/vocals)

AL: Please remember to join us for fellowship in the lobby and please remain seated as our musicians share our Postlude.

ANNE MARIE: *Me and all my friends
We're all misunderstood
They say we stand for nothing and
There's no way we ever could*

*Now we see everything that's going wrong
With the world and those who lead it
We just feel like we don't have the means
To rise above and beat it*

ANNE MARIE/LYLA: *So we keep waiting
Waiting on the world to change
We keep on waiting
Waiting on the world to change*

*It's hard to beat the system
When we're standing at a distance
So we keep waiting
Waiting on the world to change*

ANNE MARIE: *Now if we had the power
To bring our neighbors home from war
They would have never missed a Christmas
No more ribbons on their door*

*And when you trust your television
What you get is what you got
Cause when they own the information, oh
They can bend it all they want*

ANNE MARIE/LYLA: *That's why we're waiting
Waiting on the world to change
We keep on waiting
Waiting on the world to change*

*It's not that we don't care,
We just know that the fight ain't fair
So we keep on waiting
Waiting on the world to change*

*And we're still waiting
Waiting on the world to change
We keep on waiting
Waiting on the world to change*

*One day our generation
Is gonna rule the population
So we keep on waiting
Waiting on the world to change*

*We keep on waiting
Waiting on the world to change*

25. LEAVING MUSIC
(Soundtrack selections from Peter Jackson's LOTR films.)
Composer – Howard Shore

(While music on CD plays remove and/or return all papers, props, hymnals and any other materials you may have used during the service from the pulpit and dais. Make sure that the joys and sorrows sheets that were read out during the service are returned to the table on the North side of the Sanctuary underneath the hanging tapestry. The Caring Community Committee will follow up with a caring card or letter at a future date for congregants who submitted something to share with the congregation.)

26. FELLOWSHIP HOUR