

EXPECTATION (noun)

A belief that something will happen or is likely to happen; a feeling or belief about how successful, good, etc., someone or something will be (Merriam Webster)

SYNONYMS: anticipation, assumption, hope, probability, belief

Taking It Home:

Activity: "The Other Letter"

View this touching Ikea Christmas commercial.
(<http://tinyurl.com/ohv8v28>)

Your assignment: Write a letter asking for the things that you are deeply seeking this holiday season. Invite loved ones to do the same. Let these inform your gifts to one another and intentions for the New Year.

Articles:

We Are With You – Harry Potter Alliance

<http://thehpalliance.tumblr.com/post/133167507853/we-are-with-you-processing-grieving-baffled>

Skydiving – Reflection by Doug Powell

<https://revgretchenhaley.wordpress.com/2014/02/03/skydiving-reflection-by-doug-powell/>

Video:

Husband of Paris Attack Victim Sends Defiant Message to ISIS

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/paris-terror-attacks-defiant-message_564a4758e4b08cda348a221c

These materials are part of the small group ministry program at Jefferson Unitarian Church. For more information on using them, or to set up your small group, please contact Rev. Eric Banner.

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Jefferson Unitarian Church December 2015 Small Group Session: Expectation 2.0

**Opening/
Chalice
Lighting:**

As we come together,
I go into myself.
I dig into myself for a deep answer.
I have patience with everything that remains
unsolved in my heart, and I live the question.
What is required of us is that we love the
difficult and learn to deal with it.
In the difficult are the friendly forces, the hands
that work on us.
It is clear that we must embrace the struggle.
Right in the difficult we must have our joys, our
happiness, our dreams.
We create this space to go into ourselves and
see how deep the place is from which our lives
flow. (RM Rilke, adapted by Scott Rudolf)

Check In:

Up to 2 minutes per person to share what they
bring with them since the last time the group
met

Reading:

[E]xpectation [...] leads us on, urges us on,
doesn't it? I know that I live in expectation. I
expect the sun to rise tomorrow. I expect that
I'll be surprised again and again at the harm we
can do one another. And I expect that I'll be
surprised again and again by the beauty in the
world, and the depth of love that people can
have for other people. I expect it. And it draws
me on. — Rev. Joe Cleveland, Soul Matters
Minister

**Resting in
the
Silence:**

Take 2 minutes to just sit. If your group is up to
it, go longer, as long as you let people know
how long the silence will be.

**Questions
and
Quotes
From The
Common
Bowl:**

Share the quotes and questions for today's
session in the way that is customary in your
small group. You can pass the sheet, you can
select them randomly from a bowl after having
cut them into individual pieces. Or whatever
works well for your small group.

**Sharing/
Deep
Listening:**

Allow each person up to five minutes to share
what has come up for them about today's topic.
If someone does not use the full five minutes,
make sure you count to ten full breaths before
moving on to the next person, in case the
speaker is not truly finished.

**A Second
Share:**

If time allows, you may have a brief second
share from those who have found they have
more to say, keeping in mind your commitment
to going no longer than ninety minutes.

**Closing
Reading:**

Here is how we move forward: keep loving; keep
fighting; celebrate story; laugh, dance, sing -
with your friends, with strangers, with every
single person who keeps showing up when the
world tells them not to; resist hatred; resist
cynicism; know none of this is foolish; know that
it is necessary; protect and defend those who -
not for the first time - will be victims of hatred
falsely carried out in the name of justice; give
love and light to those around you and those
around the world; be excellent to each other; be
good. - The Harry Potter Alliance

**Extinguish
the
Chalice:**

Join hands and say the following together: "May
we bring more light and love into this world"
And then, extinguish your chalice until you meet
again.

Excerpt from *Our Great Covenant* by Reverend Victoria Safford

You know that when someone asks what kind of church this is and what it means to be a member, I often talk about a river, a river of history. This church has its own story [...], and that story is carried within the larger, older history of Unitarian Universalism,

- which flows from two separate streams, each a strong tributary of the river of American congregationalism,
- which flows out of the Protestant Reformation in Europe and in England,
- which branched off from the Roman Catholic Church in the 16th century,
- which in turn was one stream running down the centuries from the waters of the early Christian church in Alexandria, Jerusalem and Rome,
- which of course flowed from the mystical headwaters of the ministry and teachings of the man Jesus of Nazareth,
- whose life and spirit flowed directly out of Judaism,
- but whose later influence was shaped not only by his own origins but by later interpreters, some of whom were Jewish disciples but some of whom were Greek – and another mighty artery flows in.
- Christianity, like Islam, flowed out of Judaism,
- and Judaism flowed out of the desert -

- out of nomadic bands of wanderers and wonderers, people who stopped their caravans at night and gathered round small fires, casting questions into the embers and up to the stars, *Where do we come from? What are we? What is our purpose here? Who travels with us? Where are we going in this life?* And by those questions they were bound to everyone, everywhere and always, every people on this earth asking questions round their fires.

That's the river of religious history out of which we come. It is a powerful story of religious freedom, freedom of conscience, and radical love. Conscience and love are not uniquely Unitarian or Universalist, but our history has flowed in such a way that when either of these is constrained or compromised or diminished (freedom of conscience or radical love), we've always been among those who have broken off from the main stream and flowed freely in a new direction. Whenever someone joins here, signs their name into the book, it's not as if their story (your story, the little stream that is your story) is washed away in the great current. Rather, the course of the whole river, the direction and flow of our church here and of our whole tradition, changes just a little, simply by your coming.

We are a people who gather to remind us that we are not just shaped by the world, we are shapers of it. – Rev. Wendy Williams

“Expectation is the foundation of disappointment” David White

Do we need expectations? Why?

How does it feel when someone says “What did you expect?” after something did not turn out well?

To the outside eye, things can be so obvious, especially since we want to believe that everything is within our control. Whether we are saying it to someone else or thinking it about ourselves, somehow we seem to think that anything unpleasant should be avoided simply by making better choices. – Rev. Wendy Williams

I know that I often don’t realize I had expectations until I realize they weren’t met. Is that true for anyone else? – Rev. Wendy Williams

Expectations are premeditated resentments. - Alice Walker

How do you balance the desires for predictability and excitement?

What unspoken expectations do you have about the holidays?

We are a people whose religious heritage was about unity—one source birthed us and we return to that source about the death of these bodies. We are a people whose religious forebears steeped us in optimism—in an expectation that things would get better—progress—onward and upward forever. And even in these days, when it may seem that notion has been thrown under the bus, we lean into the gift that was our religious ancestry who loved the Hell out of theology and this world. – Rev. Wendy Williams

In the story of Hanukkah, oil that was only supposed to last one night, lasted for 8. What can we learn from the Hanukkah story about exceeding expectations?

What does the “river of history” as Safford describes, tell us about how we expect to make a difference?

Referring to the recent 60th anniversary of NAACP activist Rosa Parks refusal to yield her seat on the bus to a white person, prompting the Montgomery bus boycott.
“And then, there were all those who responded to the call to boycott—against all expectation—for a long time—to end the segregation of buses. To say to those in power, we see it differently. We are people too, whole and holy, and we will not sit in the back—we will not stand so you can sit. We will reclaim and proclaim our dignity. And in so doing, a little more light was put back in the world.” – Rev. Wendy Williams

In this challenging time, how might you bring more light into the world?