



UU CONGREGATION OF ASHEVILLE  
**EXPECTATION**

## **Our Spiritual Exercises**

### Option A: **Your Perhaps Poem**

These “[Perhaps Poems](#)” challenge us to turn our deepest assumptions and expectations on their head. Doubt even the most basic and beloved things, and do it with joy! Consider joining this playful upsetting of apple carts this month by writing your own “perhaps poem.” There are plenty of them on the website linked below to inspire you! Bring your perhaps poem to your group and share the journey of its creation,

Perhaps Poems: <http://www.beyond-the-pale.uk/perhaps.htm>

### Option B: **Remember the Water!**

We allow our expectations to control us rather than us controlling them. We have the power to choose and yet we regularly forget it when it comes to the most mundane moments of our lives. This is the challenge that author, David Foster Wallace, lifted up in his remarkable 2005 Commencement [speech](#). This month challenge yourself with the same message:

- Make time to repeatedly watch and meditate on his speech: “This is Water” <https://dotsub.com/view/6b8cc93f-3b53-486b-a1ce-025ffe6c9c52>
- Pay extra attention to the way Wallace links our forgetting with the most mundane moments in our lives.
- Figure out where the call or challenge is for you.
- Exercise your power to choose! Find opportunities to “remember the water” and practice choosing.

- Come to your group ready to share what you learned and how it altered your days.

## Option C: **A Ritual of Expectation**

Solstice fire rituals. Christmas advent wreaths and calendars. Hanukkah candles. This is the season of ritual -- rituals of preparation and expectation to be exact. Expecting and trusting the light to return is no easy task. It's one thing to intellectually believe that the dark always gives way to the light; it's quite another to feel it in your bones.

All religions say this task is much easier with ritual, and with rituals done together. So this month, recruit your family or circle of friends and engage one of the winter rituals of expectation. Here are a few links to help you decide which might be right for you:

- Hanukkah: <http://tinyurl.com/prkve8s>
- Advent: <http://adventforatheists.weebly.com/>
- Solstice: <http://tinyurl.com/pdty2tm>
- Kwanzaa: <http://www.officialkwanzaawebsite.org/celebrating.shtml>
- UU Family Christmas rituals: <http://tinyurl.com/ob2ld8a>

Remember, this is a creative task. Be sure to adapt the ritual (unless you are celebrating Kwanzaa; see link above) to fit your unique circumstances and beliefs.

## Option D: **The Expectations of a Mother: Slapped Fists, Stifled Selfhood & Stolen Childhoods**

Expect your child to be at risk from the very first moment. Expect "sequestered selfhood." Expect unpleasant emotions to be off-limits. Expect the need to slap little fists. These are the expectations of parenting. For some of us.

Poet and mother, Mia Wright asks us to hear this "[dark truth](#)." Our spiritual exercise asks us whether or not we want it to remain that way. Here is your invitation:

- Set aside time this month to watch this video multiple times: 'Darkest Truth' - a poem by Mia Wright, All Souls UU, Tulsa - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQySlgRmmXI>
- Each time, note the feelings, reactions and insights it evokes.
- Consider watching it with a trusted friend and processing it together.
- After at least three times of watching it, note how your reactions deepened or changed.
- Also ask yourself, "What does this ask of me?"

The goal of this spiritual work is not to analyze the video and figure out where you agree or disagree. The invitation is for you to identify what it asks of you and how it opens your eyes.

Come to your group and share your journey.

## Your Question

*As always, don't treat these questions like "homework" or a list that needs to be covered in its entirety. Instead, simply pick the one question that "hooks" you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The goal of these questions is not to help you analyze what expectation means, but to figure out what being a person of expectation means for you today. So, which question is calling to you?*

1. What if "it" begins this very month?! What would happen if you knew this month was going to be the start of some yet-to-be discovered new adventure?
2. Are you expecting too much of *yourself*?
3. Are you expecting too little?
4. Have you been chasing an expectation too long? Is it time to let it go?
5. Did the lessons your parents taught you about the power and possibility of expectation prove correct?
6. Are your holiday expectations set too high?
7. Are your holiday expectations too low? Isn't this a time of expecting miracles?
8. What happens to you when you don't get what you expect? Is there work there for you?

9. Are you sure you shouldn't wait just a little bit more? Is life asking you to be patient just a little bit longer? Are you sure that expectation of yours isn't right around the bend?
10. Do you expect the best or the worst of people? Are they innocent until proven guilty or guilty until proven innocent?
11. Are you really open to "whatever comes"?
12. Has the weight of societal expectations become more than you want to bear alone?
13. What's your question? Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.