



UU CONGREGATION OF ASHEVILLE  
**EXPECTATION**

## **Recommended Resources**

As always, this is not required reading. We will not analyze or dissect these pieces in our group. They are simply meant to get your thinking started, and maybe open you to new ways of thinking about what it means to be *a people of expectation*.

### **First Thoughts:**

#### **EXPECTATION**

*Definition:* 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 (*from Merriam Webster*)

*Synonyms:* anticipation, assumption, hope, probability, belief

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### **Wise Words:**

God give us rain when we expect sun.  
Give us music when we expect trouble.  
Give us tears when we expect breakfast.  
Give us dreams when we expect a storm.  
Give us a stray dog when we expect congratulations.  
God play with us, turn us sideways and around.

**~Michael Leunig**

#### **A Walk**

My eyes already touch the sunny hill,  
going far ahead of the road I have begun.

So we are grasped by what we cannot grasp;  
It has its inner light even from a distance-  
And changes us, even if we do not reach it,  
    into something else, which hardly sensing it,  
    we already are;  
A gesture waves us on, answering our own wave...  
    but what we feel is the wind in our faces.

**~Rainer Marie Rilke**

I believe that we live the story we tell ourselves—and others—about the life we're leading... If you constantly interview your child for pain, your child may begin to hear a story of social suffering emerge from her own mouth. Soon she will begin to believe it and will see herself as a victim.

**~Michael Thompson**

If your heart is a volcano, how shall you expect flowers to bloom?

**~Khalil Gibran**

[Faith] is the wakeful expectation of God, which touches all our senses. The early Christians prayed standing up, looking up, with outstretched arms and wide-open eyes, ready to walk or to leap forward. We can see this from the pictures in the catacombs in Rome. Their posture reflects tense expectation, not quiet heart searching. ... We are watching for God's advent. With tense attention, we open all our senses for the coming of God into our lives, into our society, to this earth.

**~Jurgen Moltmann**

Patience is the virtue that shows us that the time of the soul and the time of the spirit are different than everyday time. Patience is required to be in healthy connection with soul and spirit. Patience concerns a particular form or way of waiting; it is one filled with expectation.

**~Robert Sardello**

Draw closer to the deep meanings of hope — hope is a movement within the human person that sees the present and all its prospects, or lack thereof, in light of some other prospect, something good, or even slightly better, that is to come. *It recognizes that what is presently possible might not be all there is.* Hope holds out and holds on.

**~Michael Downey**

Expectations are resentments under construction.

**~Anne Lamott**

Our expectations frame our view of what is to come. Too often that frame is distorted by preoccupations with where we have been, *like trying to walk forward while staring back over your shoulder*. Instead if we look to the vision of the future we seek, our highest aims, we create expectations that face us fully forward into our lives. Each step going forward toward that vision is also grounded in our present experience and creates a dialogue between what is true in our life and our expectations for what it can be.

**~Rev. Dr. Frances Sink, Soul Matters Minister**

When I first hear the word expectation, I am most tempted to say something like this: Expectation runs ahead of the present moment, teasing us into believing we know what the next moment will contain, tempting us to assert that we know what the next moment should consist of. Expectation is something we need to let go of, that gets in the way of truly being with, accepting, and loving one another.

But I recognize that part of what I'm doing there is understanding expectation as judgment, expectation as privilege. Expectation as something that gets in the way of my ability to live in the moment, to be present to what is real right now.

But expectation also 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**

The seasons may return with regularity, but these holidays do not simply celebrate the cycles of time. Instead, they tell stories about unexpected turns in human history. They express a form of faith that dares to reflect on human expectations being upset. ... The Jewish and Christian holidays remind us to find the mark of God less in the regularities of nature than in the unexpected turns that life can take.

**~John Buehrens**

And the baby!

Whoever expected a baby?

Whoever expected the advent of God in a helpless child?

Had the Messiah arrived in the blazing light of the glory

of a legion of angels wielding golden swords,

the whole world could have been conquered for Christ

right then and there

and we in the church - to say nothing of the world! -

wouldn't have so much trouble today.  
Even now we simply do not expect  
to face the world armed with love.

~**“Kneeling in Bethlehem”** by Ann Weems (full poem:  
<http://tinyurl.com/og2mgz> )

**“The Moment of Magic”** by Rev. Victoria Safford  
<http://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/moment-of-magic>

**“Expect Nothing”** by Alice Walker  
<http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/42100-expect-nothing-live-frugally-on-surprise-become-a-stranger-to>

**“Things to Think”** by Robert Bly  
<http://tinyurl.com/p7gdae4>

**“The Unexpected Visitor,”** a sermon by the Rev. Kate Landis  
<https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/sermons-uuac/2011/apr172011.pdf>

**“Skydiving”**  
A reflection on what happens when what we think will happen doesn't match up  
with what actually happens!  
<https://revgretchenhaley.wordpress.com/2014/02/03/skydiving-reflection-by-doug-powell/>

**“Perhaps”** by Shu Ting  
<http://www.ayearofbeinghere.com/2013/12/shu-ting-perhaps.html>

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## Videos & Podcasts:

**“How to Become Batman”**  
A podcast about the power of expectations: “Alix and Lulu examine the surprising effect our expectations can have on the people around us. Plus, the story of a blind man who says expectations have helped him see. Yes, see.”  
<http://www.npr.org/programs/invisibilia/378577902/how-to-become-batman>

**“Don't Interview for Pain”**  
A podcast centered on the quote “I believe that we live the story we tell ourselves - and others - about the life we're leading.”  
[http://gretchenrubin.com/happiness\\_project/2015/09/podcast-28/](http://gretchenrubin.com/happiness_project/2015/09/podcast-28/)

## **StoryCorps**

A three-minute film about a black man, his white mother, and the brutality he faced - because of others' expectations - when pulled over by police:

<https://www.facebook.com/Upworthy/videos/1069739096400281/>

## **“The Other Letter”**

In this Ikea Christmas commercial, children are asked to write two letters: one to The Three Kings (Spain's version of Santa) and one to their parents.

<http://tinyurl.com/ohv8v28>

## **Human Clip #2: Death is not the end of everything**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWKNwzGL8C0>

## **How expectations about aging affects a young couple**

<http://twistedifter.com/videos/young-couple-gets-increasingly-aged-with-make-up-and-revealed-to-each-other/>

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## **Articles & Online:**

**“How the Power of Expectations Can Allow You to Bend Reality”** by Gareth Cook

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-the-power-of-expectations-can-allow-you-to-bend-reality/>

## **“What We Expect Is What We Get”**

If you want to change your experiences, change your expectations, studies tell us (again). What you think will happen may really affect you physically. *Psychology Today* has posted four studies that support and tease out the concept:

<http://lifehacker.com/5807819/what-we-expect-is-what-we-get>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-big-questions/201105/we-see-in-others-what-we-expect-see>

## **“Children: When Expectations Don't Meet Reality”**

<http://www.pbs.org/parents/special/article-expectations-meetreality.html>

## **“You Can't Always Get What You Want: On Music And Expectation”**

<http://www.npr.org/sections/therecord/2012/07/13/156718598/you-cant-always-get-what-you-want-on-music-and-expectation>

## **The world is full of surprising treasures**

<http://boredomtherapy.com/hidden-usb-treasure-hunt/?as=6025460698084>

## **Expectations that Empower**

<http://www.upworthy.com/a-dad-took-photos-of-his-daughter-as-history-making-women-and-they-are-incredible?c=upw1&u=41aa6fc0057cfdc850d917bc669deaf216c544e>

## **Advent for Atheists (website resource)**

Created by a UU Soul Matters member Becca Boerger, this website offers a description of the traditional advent candles ritual, themes for each of the four weeks of advent and great readings to guide you on your way.

<http://adventforatheists.weebly.com/advent-an-introduction.html>

## **When Expectations Meet Reality (A bit of fun)**

<http://justsomething.co/the-34-most-hilarious-pinterest-fails-ever/>

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## **Songs:**

### **“In the Darkness of the Winter”**

A UU Christmas Carol by Rev. Suzelle Lynch, Soul Matters member

<http://tinyurl.com/o7mwxc0>

### **“Watershed” by the Indigo Girls**

Lyrics: <http://tinyurl.com/nhamcmf>

To listen, click on “Watershed”:

[http://www.indigogirls.com/discography\\_singles.html](http://www.indigogirls.com/discography_singles.html)

### **“Pressure Off”**

A new song by 80s pop rock group Duran Duran

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5qFhSWA9Cz4>

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## **Books:**

### ***Mind Over Mind* by Chris Berdik**

*from the author’s website: “Mind Over Mind offers a captivating look at the frontiers of expectations research revealing how our brains work in the future tense and how our assumptions – about the next few milliseconds or the next few years – bend reality.”*

[http://www.amazon.com/Mind-Over-Surprising-Power-Expectations/dp/1591846579/ref=tmm\\_pap\\_swatch\\_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=1447001821&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/Mind-Over-Surprising-Power-Expectations/dp/1591846579/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=1447001821&sr=1-1)

***Expectation Hangover: Overcoming Disappointments in Work, Love, and Life***

**by Christine Hassler**

*from the book review:* "Expectation Hangovers happen when a desired result is not met, an outcome is achieved but it does not give us the feelings we thought it would, life throws us a curveball, or we simply do not feel we are living up to the expectations placed upon us (by ourselves or others)."

<http://www.amazon.com/Expectation-Hangover-Overcoming-Disappointment-Work/dp/1608682412>

***Seven Spiritual Gifts of Waiting***

**by Holly Whitcomb**

*from the book review:* In America, waiting presents an enormous challenge. We are impatient, "fix-it" kinds of people — and not all situations can be fixed. This book presents seven spiritual gifts that waiting can teach us: Patience, Loss of Control, Live in the Present, Compassion, Gratitude, Humility, and Trust in God. An excellent resource during times of waiting within the church year including Advent and Lent, the book includes spiritual exercises and reflection questions for personal or group use as well as a retreat design.

[http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000VIHC0C?keywords=seven%20spiritual%20gifts%20of%20waiting&qid=1447001710&ref\\_=sr\\_1\\_1&s=books&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000VIHC0C?keywords=seven%20spiritual%20gifts%20of%20waiting&qid=1447001710&ref_=sr_1_1&s=books&sr=1-1)

***Unplug the Christmas Machine: A Complete Guide to Putting Love and Joy Back into the Season***

**by Jo Robinson and Jean C. Staeheli**

*from the book review:* In the pages of Unplug the Christmas Machine, Jo Robinson and Jean Coppock Staeheli answer the questions they have heard most often in their many years of talking with people about Christmas, such as: "How can I reduce the stress of preparing for Christmas?" "How can I make our celebration more spiritual and less materialistic?"

[http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0688109616?keywords=unplug%20the%20christmas%20machine&qid=1446928225&ref\\_=sr\\_1\\_1&s=books&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0688109616?keywords=unplug%20the%20christmas%20machine&qid=1446928225&ref_=sr_1_1&s=books&sr=1-1)

**List of books for children and families about expectation:**

<http://amzn.com/w/1675HLJDDA067>

If you've enjoyed this packet and are not a part of Soul Matters or a Unitarian Universalist congregation, please learn more about how to join us at

<http://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com>

Join the Soul Matters Facebook page to engage in the theme with participants from all around the US and Canada:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/soulmatters/>