

September 2019
Exploring What It Means to be a People of Expectation

As the Worship Arts Team and I plan services, we use a source called Soul Matters, which provides a monthly theme. Our Chalice Groups also use Soul Matters themes and this year, this theme will also be used in our Religious Education classes. I will also have a sermon conversation on this theme once each month. This month the conversation will be held on September 22nd after second service. September's theme is this question: What does it mean to be a people of expectation?

From the Soul Matters packet: “We’ve all heard the line: “You get what you expect.” It’s very UU. Liberal religion has always emphasized the tremendous power human beings have to shape their reality. And not just with our actions, but also with our expectations. We know that if you expect people to be good, they will likely rise to the task. If you have faith in your plans, opportunities will likely appear. And yet shaping reality and trusting reality are two very different things. Sometimes we UUs become so focused on taking hold of life that we lose the spiritual skill of allowing life to hold us. And there’s a lot at stake in being able to do both. We human beings weren’t just made to manifest our power; we were born to learn we are part of a greater whole. Yes, we are strong, but we also tire. And so the question at the core of our souls is not just “Can I expect to make an imprint on life?” but ‘Can I trust life to carry me if I let go and rest?’”

Here are some quotes about the month’s theme:

*If you treat an individual as he is, he will remain how he is. But if you treat him as if he were what he ought to be and could be, he will become what he ought to be and could be.”
-Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

*When we put down ideas of what life should be like, we are free to wholeheartedly say yes to our life as it is.
-Tara Brach

*What will mess you up most in life is the picture in your head of how it’s supposed to be.
-Unknown

*We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aids, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn, which does not forsake us even in our soundest sleep. I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of [human beings] to elevate [their] life by a conscious endeavor.
-Henry David Thoreau, Walden

Here are some questions for reflection from Soul Matters:

Has life ever blessed you by upending your expectations?

As you’ve gotten older, do you expect more of life or less of life? How about people? Has age convinced you to expect the best or the worst in them?

Do you have a spiritual practice that helps you lean into life’s unexpected twists and turns? Is it time to get one?