

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website  
Session Plan  
**Expectations**  
First Parish Church of Stow and Action, MA December 2016

**Opening Words and Chalice Lighting**

“We are a people of expectation, trusting that the world will deliver what we want, yet opening our hearts to a universe of beauty and struggle beyond all prediction. We are a people of expectation, anticipating what we feel we deserve, but faithful to the path’s unfolding, even when it leads to wilderness. As a people of expectation, we light this chalice with hope and joy. May its warmth fire our hearts and inspire our spirits.” – *Unitarian Universalist Church West, Brookfield WI*

**Check-in/ Sharing:** This is a time to mention briefly any major issue or event on your mind that you would like to share.

**Topic: Expectations**

“Expectations are resentments under construction.” – *Anne Lamont*

“My expectations were reduced to zero when I was 21. Everything since then has been a bonus.” – *Stephen Hawking, (theoretical physicist diagnosed with ALS in 1963 and given two years to live)*

“What I have since realized is that if people expect you to be brave, sometimes you pretend that you are, even when you are frightened down to your very bones.” — *Sharon Creech, Walk Two Moons*

“When you stop expecting people to be perfect, you can like them for who they are.” — *Donald Miller*

“A life that is burdened with expectations is a heavy life. Its fruit is sorrow and disappointment.” -- *Douglas Adams*

“We find what we expect to find, and we receive what we ask for.” -- *Elbert Hubbard*

“Give 100% effort to the task at hand but have precisely 0% invested in the outcome. This is, of course, extremely difficult to pull off. Normally, the more effort we exert, the higher our expectations – and, often, the greater our disappointment.” -- *Eric Weiner*

Expectations have a way of creeping up on us. We tend to meet both life and the people around us with expectations, some conscious, some not. Of course, the people around us tend to meet us with expectations for who we are and how we will behave as well.

Hope and expectations are closely coupled for many people and can be difficult to disentangle. How bereft we would be without hope! Can we say the same about expectations? Some of us tend toward negative expectations, negative predictions. Some of us tend toward more positive expectations.

Few of us actually meet the events of our lives or the people in it with no expectations, and it isn't clear that we would want to do so. The folk wisdom embodied in the quotations about expectations suggests that they lead to both superior performance and disappointment, perhaps not at the same time.

### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. What effects have the expectations about you by others (parents, siblings, friends, strangers) had on your life?
2. Are you expecting too much of yourself? Are you expecting too little?
3. How would you describe the difference between believing in someone and having high expectations for them?
4. What are your expectations for next week? Next month? Next year?
5. How do you respond when you don't get what you expect?
6. In what ways are you open to "whatever comes"?

(Group will take a few minutes to consider topic and questions followed by sharing)

**Wrapping Up:** How did you like this topic and session?

### **Closing Words:**

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.  
Play with us, turn us sideways and around.

- *Michael Leunig*

*Includes content from First Parish Church UU, Cohasset MA and Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Newark, DE.*