



Themes: Expectation, Belonging, Attention

Expectation

By The Rev. Heather Janules

This September, we are invited to consider “what it means to be a people of *expectation*.” This is a fitting theme for the beginning of a new program year. Those who have traveled with the Winchester Unitarian Society community for a long time likely have realistic expectations of what is to come, familiar with WUS’s traditions, rituals and committed members. Those who are new to this community – perhaps even new to Unitarian Universalism – may have different expectations.

Yet, I have lived through enough cycles of congregational life to know that all of us will have our expectations questioned this year. There are ways we will be challenged, surprised and delighted that we will not predict. This is what happens when people are brave enough to create and sustain a community together. Of course, it is a given that our individual lives will also include experiences beyond what we anticipate.

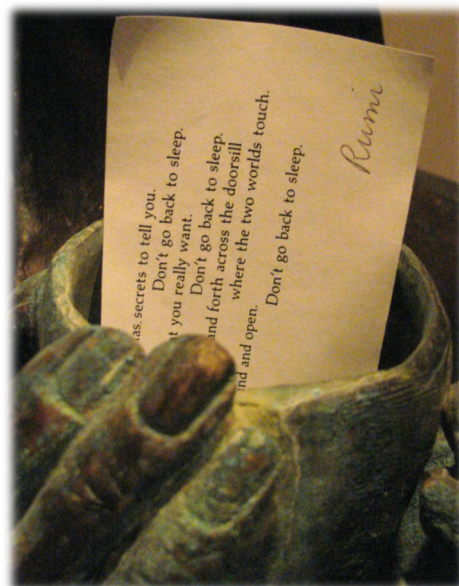
As I think about “expectation,” I am mindful of some negative connotations. I cannot help but to think about surveys, about “exceeding, meeting or falling short” of expectations. When we think of “expectation,” perhaps their distant cousin, “evaluation,” follows close behind.

I also think about “disappointment.” Perhaps you have heard the saying that “expectations are premeditated resentments?” If we have a completely open mind to what will happen in life, what will happen in our relationships, it’s hard to be angry that others have “fallen short of expectations.” Easier said than done, I know.

But challenging expectations has a positive quality too. One thing I love about Unitarian Universalist congregations is, simply, its people. We attract remarkable people who have lived – and do live – fascinating lives. In this way, we are examples and teachers for each other. I have observed so many who have defied the expectations of what it means to be a child, a woman, a spouse, an

elder. A human. To go beyond the expectations of what mainstream culture asks of us not only liberates our own selves but also those around us.

And, of course, sometimes our expectations of joy and goodness are met and our trust in life is renewed. This is my prayer for all of us this year, as is the hope that when times of pain or failure or disappointment come, we can be there for one another. From my time with the congregation, this is an expectation I anticipate will be met in abundance and with grace.



The full poem by Sufi mystic Jalāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī invites us into awareness of the present moment and possibilities that await us: *The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you./Don’t go back to sleep./You must ask for what you really want./Don’t go back to sleep./People are going back and forth across the door sill/Where the two worlds touch./The door is round and open./Don’t go back to sleep.*

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We Belong Together



By Sam Wilson, Director of Youth Ministries

Facing global climate crises, threats of nuclear warfare, and seemingly never-ending blunders from the executive office of the United States, many of us are feeling bombarded on a daily basis by the state of the world and the future of our planet. It takes a toll on us. Subsequently, we hear often about how important it is to take care of ourselves in these trying times, and one need not look very far to find a variety of blog posts, articles, and products that are all geared toward self-care practices.

While self-care is very important, a new term and concept has been emerging recently in social movements that I think will become more and more necessary as we continue to face the effects of climate change in combination with capitalism: community care.

What is community care? It's basically just taking care of each other and taking care of the people in your communities. It's a term that really started to coalesce around various protests in the past few years, when protesters recognized that they needed to take care of each other in order to mitigate harm from police, white supremacists, etc. Nakita Valerio, a Toronto-based community organizer and researcher who specializes in building cross-cultural bridges, also defines community care as "People committed to leveraging their privilege to be there for one another in various ways."

"Community care can look like a lot of different things," Valerio says. "It can be as simple as reaching out to somebody over text when you just need someone to talk. It can be someone grabbing groceries for you or somebody coming and doing your dishes and watching your kids while you're grieving."

Doesn't that sound a lot like what Winchester Unitarian Society already does for our members during their times of need?

What's particularly interesting and important about shifting the focus from self-care to community care, though, is the way in which it reverberates with the goals of social justice movements: "Community care is a better stepping stone [to justice] than self-care," Valerio says. "It addresses the fact that we're naturally cooperative. We require validation from one another to psychologically persevere and be resilient. That's where community care offers something different. We're doing it together and trying to survive in a system that's built against us." Unlike self-care, which is much more easily marketable, community care also shifts away from consumer culture and capitalism and focuses much more on equity and systemic equality.

I suspect that in the coming years our society will only survive if we learn how to create and rely on more and more extensive networks of communities of care. Due to this, I would argue that it is imperative that as a liberal religious institution, we work harder, and faster, at retaining our millennials and youth, and getting the good word out about who we are and what we do to more and more young people. We need to combat the voice of the religious right in the public sphere while maintaining our close-knit and caring communities here at home as well. Next time you stop to ask yourself what you're doing to take care of yourself today, I would also ask you to stop and ask yourself how you've taken care of someone else in your community today, too. We belong together on this planet, and indeed it may be the only way we will be able to be here at all in the future.

"Do you already know that your existence--who and how you are--is in and of itself a contribution to the people and place around you? Not after or because you do some particular thing, but simply the miracle of your life. And that the people around you, and the place(s), have contributions as well? **Do you understand that your quality of life and your survival are tied to how authentic and generous the connections are between you and the people and place you live with and in?**

- Adrienne Maree Brown

“Live From Winchester Unitarian Society!”

By Marianne DiBlasi, Intern Minister

When I was in Chicago for seminary classes last spring, I had some free time over the weekend and looked for something fun to do. I heard about a “Saturday Night Live: The Experience” exhibit at the Museum of Broadcast Communications and decided to go. When it comes to watching Saturday Night Live (SNL), I was a big fan during the early days and loved many skits with the original cast. Now, I consider myself a fair-weather fan. I am mostly interested in the guest host’s monologue and the cold open skit that offers a creative take on a current event. The cold open ends with an exuberant, in unison, cry from the actors... “Live from New York, it’s Saturday Night!” I was excited to get a behind-the-scenes look at this iconic NBC sketch comedy show. Little did I know; I was about to be reminded of life as a minister at Winchester Unitarian Society.

The SNL exhibit takes visitors on a journey of the hectic, fast-paced creative processes of how the show comes together in just 6 days; each exhibit room representing a day of the week. We entered on Monday, the day when writers and cast members meet to pitch jokes and toss around story ideas. Tuesday is dedicated to writing, which usually requires pulling an all-nighter to get the sketches done. Wednesday is the critical day when they read through every script and decide out of the ~40 skits which 10-12 will survive. Sets are constructed, costumes, wigs, and make-up are designed and created on Thursday. Friday and Saturday are frantic days of rehearsals, re-writes, adjustments to sets, lighting and costumes; which continue to be made right up until the show finally goes live on Saturday night. I now have a much deeper appreciation for the attention to details, culmination of collaborative effort, and feeling of exhilaration in that infamous phrase “Live from New York, it’s Saturday Night!”

As your intern minister, one of the many enlightening parts of ministry has been engaging in the process of leading all aspects of a worship service – very much a collaborative creative process of transforming ideas around a theme into a worship service each week. The worship process begins months in advance with considering and researching possible sermon topics, based on the monthly theme. The planning process begins in earnest two weeks prior to the service when the worship lead presents a draft order of service at the worship planning meeting. Together, the staff discusses the essential message and brainstorms ideas for hymns, the First Reflection, and readings that will support the message. Revisions are made and the sermon writing begins. Music is rehearsed. The choir practices together for 1.5 hours each week and individually. Simultaneously, the worship lead submits the sermon title and description to the office, selects the Share-the-Plate recipient, coordinates

with the Worship Associate and chalice lighters, drafts the flower dedication words (if no one has dedicated them already) and questions for the car-ride home, writes the special announcements, and acquires any special props.

On Thursday, the worship lead, Music Director, RE lead teacher, and Green Sanctuary member send their order-of-service elements to the administrator and a draft order-of-service is created for us to review. On Friday, the order-of-service is finalized, copies are produced for the ushers to distribute to congregants on Sunday morning, the worship lead creates a script and communicates special instructions to the worship associate. On Saturday, the sermon is rehearsed, and final edits are made. At 9:30am on Sunday, all worship participants meet in the minister’s office for a “huddle” to do a final run through of the service and rehearse any skits. The person leading Family Worship leaves for the chapel at 9:55am (a whole different service). Chalice lighters are prepped at 10:20 and precisely at 10:30, John Kramer and the Worship Associate enter the Sanctuary, marking the time when the service finally goes live on Sunday morning.

As an intern minister, I have a much deeper appreciation for the holy work of paying attention to details, the culmination of collaborative effort, and the feeling of exhilaration that goes into designing and delivering a worship service – all in service to creating a sacred hour of communal worship. Since I saw the SNL exhibit, I do have a fantasy of the worship team crying out in exuberant unison.... “Live from Winchester Unitarian Society, it’s Sunday morning worship!” But, perhaps that’s not very sacred or worship-like, so I’ll just let that exhilarating phrase which expresses the joy of when a worship service goes “live,” be made silently in my heart.



Welcome Our New Administrator!

Hello Winchester UU,

My name is Thomas Slack and I have been hired to be the new Coordinator of Administration and Communication here at the Winchester Unitarian Society. I am absolutely delighted to have been given the honor to serve your congregation in this role. I look forward to meeting all of you and getting to know you better while helping your community as best I can.

I was born in Winchester and raised in Woburn. I am a veteran of the U.S. Air Force, and incorporated their core values of integrity, service, and excellence into the way I live my life. Since separating from the Air Force, the core value of "Service before self" has been a guiding light in the work I have chosen to do. I appreciate all opportunities to share my work and life experiences with others in hopes of facilitating our mutual growth.



I recently completed a bachelor's degree in liberal arts with concentrations in writing and education from UMass Lowell. Upon graduating in May I began searching for employment opportunities that would allow me to use my experience and skill sets to continue to be of service to the world and my fellow human beings.

The discovery of your organization was a blessing. It was nice to find a community so committed to making this world a better place for everyone. The mission and vision of the Winchester Unitarian Society really resonated with me on a personal and spiritual level. Similar to your community I have a strong affinity for spiritual exploration and growth as well as a desire to help others. I am excited for the opportunity to serve the members of this community and I am looking forward to seeing where this next chapter of my life may lead.

The Ballad of the Brown King

A Cantata in Nine Movements by Margaret Bonds with text by Langston Hughes

Music Sunday: December 8th 10:30 AM



Photo: Margaret Bonds

*By John Kramer,
Director of
Music*

This December 8th during worship as part of our fall Music Sunday, the choir will be presenting *The Ballad of the Brown King*, a cantata in nine movements by

the composer Margaret Bonds with text by Langston Hughes. Bonds was born in Chicago in 1913 and showed her musical talents early, writing her first composition at age 5. She earned both undergraduate and graduate degrees from Northwestern University, although as one of the only Black students there, her time was marred by racism

and prejudice, including indignities such as not being able to use the swimming pool. Her piano teacher while in Chicago was Florence B. Price (1887-1953), another African-American woman pioneer in classical music. In 1934 Bonds performed Price's piano concerto with the Women's Symphony Orchestra of Chicago. The previous year Bonds, at the age of 20, became the first Black soloist to perform with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Price and Bonds were to become life long friends. Bonds also studied music with William Dawson, whom many will know for his profound settings of African-American spirituals, many of which our choir has sung.

Margaret Bonds met Langston Hughes during her time in Chicago (she moved to New York City in 1939) and they became life-long friends, exchanging letters on a weekly basis. They collaborated on a number of works including two cantatas, *The Ballad of the Brown King*, and *Simon Bore the Cross*. Bonds also set many poems by Hughes, including *The Negro Speaks of Rivers*. *The Ballad of the Brown King* was first performed in December of 1954 and

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The Thing We Don't Talk About

By Karen Caputo, WUS Member

(Testimonial delivered on June 2, 2019; edited slightly for print)

Good morning. I have to tell you that this is absolutely the last place I'd like to be right now: the mere thought of speaking in front of all of you sets off my fight-or-flight response...But I'm here, why? Because the program I was asked to talk about is that important and the subject is one that is often referred to WUS as "the one we don't talk about"!

OWL, or the Our Whole Lives program, is that important! And I want you all to know that the fact that we offer this program is one of the many things that makes me both proud and grateful to be a member of this church.

You see, I'm the parent of two teens who have been through the program, I'm also a trained OWL facilitator and I often talk to people outside of our congregation about the program whenever it's appropriate to do.

OWL can sometimes be misunderstood as and equated with being merely a sex ed class. But, OWL is SO much more than that. In the OWL program the leaders are trained as *facilitators*, not teachers. The lessons are presented as *workshops*, not lectures.

OWL workshops are extremely interactive, designed to be experiential, full of activities that are aimed at encouraging teens to delve deeply into very sensitive and often taboo topics. This is often accomplished in a fun and playful way. Did you know you could learn about the transmission of STI's using M&M's or Skittles?!? Learn about the difference between prophylactics using feathers, or learn about consent by asking to give a fist bump?

These workshops can be both fun and transformative by allowing teens to discover something of vital importance: their OWN feelings, thoughts and values on the topics presented. Where else can you hear a group of teens contemplating how they would each handle a unplanned pregnancy in a non-judgmental and supportive space.

Helping teens discover and articulate their own feelings, thoughts and values is a vital part of this program. With this self knowledge teens are more equipped to navigate the challenges and joys of being a sexual person. After almost a year of talking about these topics within the safety and security of the OWL room they become at least "a little" more comfortable talking about them and hopefully better able to advocate for themselves within relationships.

OWL shares evidence-based and medically accurate information, it dispels myths around sex and sexuality, it explains the range of sexuality and the interaction between biological sex, gender identity, sexual attraction, and physical appearance, explains that sex and sexual activity should always be consensual and mutually pleasurable, it shares all legal options to manage an unplanned pregnancy, it's inclusive and validates the LGBTQIA experience as perfectly normal. And these represent only a fraction of the workshops.

I believe that in a society that often perpetuates shame around sexual activity, homophobia, sexism, legislating female bodies, and toxic masculinity the OWL program can be viewed as an inculcation against these unhealthy forces, I will even go so far to say that the OWL program is kind of radical that way, it's certainly transformative and it can actually be life saving. It's also not new...we've been offering OWL since 1998! (And before that, a program called AYS, About Your Sexuality, since the 1970's.)

We should all be very proud that we support this program. Instead of being the program we don't talk about in church, we might want to consider shouting it from the rooftops.



at

"Our Whole Lives," also known as "OWL" is a comprehensive sexuality education program; offered to seventh graders this fall and winter at the Winchester Unitarian Society. We proudly affirm the program values, and welcome members of the greater Winchester Community, so tell your friends! Our (mandatory) parents orientation takes place on Sunday, September 29th at 4:00 PM. The first class session begins on October 20th, 4:30-6:00 PM Learn more here:*

<https://www.winchesteruu.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/OWL-flyer-enrolling-2019.pdf>

If you have any additional questions or would like to express interest, please contact OWL@Winchesteruu.org



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The 2019-2020 Concert Series

Piano Quartets of Brahms and Kramer

Friday, October 18th at 8:00 PM

Come hear and delight in the warmth of chamber music in the comfort of our sanctuary.

Jazz in the Sanctuary

Friday, January 24th at 8:00 PM

Year after year this remains our most popular concert, so mark your calendar now and don't miss out!

Windborne

Friday, May 8th at 8:00 PM

Internationally acclaimed vocal ensemble Windborne is a group of vocal chameleons who specialize in close harmony singing, shifting effortlessly between drastically different styles of traditional music with the same concert. Their musical knowledge spans many continents and cultures, but they remain deeply rooted in American folk singing traditions.

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was broadcast in a televised concert on NBC in 1960. It tells the story of the Three Wise Men through the lens of Balthazar, the "brown king", who came from Ethiopia to visit the baby Jesus. In the work, Bonds blends Western European classical styles with African American musical traditions, so you can hear strains of jazz, blues, calypso. She also uses Spirituals in the piece, focusing on *Nobody Knows the Trouble I See*, which she uses throughout the work.

Both Margaret Bonds and her teacher Florence B. Price are musical voices that have been overlooked by a predominantly white male European classical music establishment. In recent years both are having something of a renaissance and I am pleased that we are able to present this work this fall. Bonds writes, "I honestly want the propaganda of this piece spread all over the world. Further, in the composing of the music I compared the march [on] Montgomery with the ride in the desert." She also writes in a letter to Hughes, "I'll love it when more singers who are NOT Negroes recognize the universal message in our songs and sing them far and wide. It's happening more and more..." Bonds and Hughes dedicated *The Ballad of the Brown King* to Martin Luther King Jr.

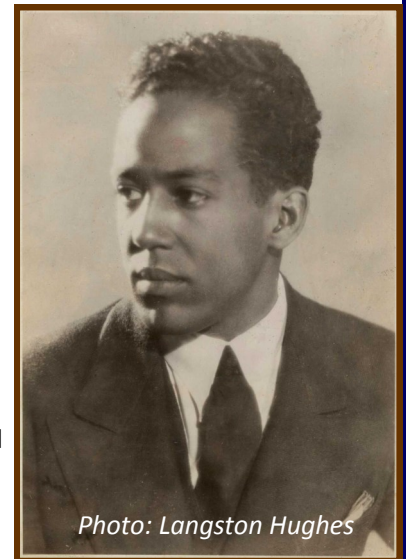


Photo: Langston Hughes